THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BATTLEFIELD –

LORD KITCHENER'S MIDDLE-CLASS VOLUNTEERS IN THE GREAT WAR

Master's Thesis
Annika Pöysä
September 2017
University of Helsinki
Faculty of Humanities
Department of Philosophy, History,
Culture and Art studies
General History

HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO
HELSINGFORS UNIVERSITET
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

Tiedekunta/Osasto – Fakultet/Sektion – Faculty	Laitos – Institution – Department
Humanistinen tiedekunta	Filosofian, historian, kulttuurin ja taiteiden tutkimuksen laitos

Tekijä – Författare – Author

Annika Pöysä

Työn nimi – Arbetets titel – Title

The psychological battlefield – Lord Kitchener's middle-class volunteers in the Great War

Oppiaine – Läroämne – Subject

Yleinen historia

Työn laji – Arbetets art – Level	Aika – Datum – Month and year	Sivumäärä– Sidoantal – Number of pages
Pro gradu	Syyskuu 2017	75s. + liitteet

Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract

Tämä tutkielma tarkastelee brittiläisen keskiluokan sotilaiden psykologista kokemusta vapaaehtoisina sotilaina Kitchenerin armeijassa ensimmäisen maailmansodan aikaan. Tämän tutkielman tarkoitus on selvittää, miten sota vaikutti sotilaisiin, ja miksi he reagoivat siihen tutkielman selvittämin tavoin. Tutkielmassa kysymystä tarkastellaan sotilaiden näkökulmasta neljän sodan aspektin kautta, jotka ovat; armeijaorganisaatio, aseveljet, tappaminen ja kuolemanuhka. Motivaatio tutkielman takana oli ymmärryksen lisääminen näiden sotilaiden kokemuksesta sen jälkeen, kun he olivat vapaaehtoisina liittyneet maailman ensimmäiseen teolliseen sotaan.

Kitchenerin armeija oli siviilisotilaiden armeija, ja se perustettiin täydentämään olemassaolevan brittiarmeijan rivejä, jotta valtio kykenisi jatkamaan sodankäyntiä. Sekä historiallista ja psykologista tutkimuskirjallisuutta on hyödynnetty tutkielman alkuperäislähteiden tulkinnoissa. Tutkielmassa käytetyt alkuperäislähteet ovat kirjeitä ja päiväkirjoja rintamalta, ja näiden lähteiden kautta tutkielmassa pyritään ymmärtämään ja analysoimaan niitä kokemuksia, jotka sotilaat ovat itse sanelleet. Alkuperäislähteiden lähiluku tutkimuskirjallisuuteen perustuvalla analyysilla oli tämän tutkimuksen ensisijainen metodi, johon sen johtopäätökset perustuvat. Tutkielman teoreettinen viitekehys ja siitä johtuva analyysi tukee siis vahvasti myös psykologiseen tutkimuskirjallisuuteen ja sen konsepteihin. Sotilaiden kokemusten kontekstualisoimiseen laajempaan kulttuuriseen kontekstiinsa ja vallitsevaan ajanjaksoon käytettiin maskuliinisuuden konseptia aikalaisen britti-keskiluokan kulttuurissa. Psykologisista käsitteistä tärkeimmät käsittelevät ryhmäkäyttäytymistä ja stressireaktioita, jotka tunnustetaan psykologian tutkimuksessa useimmiten defensseinä ja elämänhallinnan valineinä. Siinä missä defenssit käsitetään usein alitajuisina mielen reaktioina mahdollisesti stressiä lisäävään informaatioon, elämänhallinnan välineet ovat ainakin osittain tietoisia ja henkilön itsensä ylläpitämiä. Elämänhallinnan keinoin henkilö yrittää aktiivisesti pidättäytyä kivuliaaksi tiedetyn kohtaamiselta, samalla kun defenssit vastaavat samoihin ärsykkeisiin automaattisesti.

Tutkielman johtopäätökset implikoivat, että sotilaan sosiaalinen konteksti ennen sotaa vaikutti osin heidän kokemuksiinsa sodasta sekä ennen, että jälkeen armeijaan liittymisen. Sotilaiden kulttuurillinen konteksti tarjosi heille viitekehyksen sekä heidän sisäistetyille arvoilleen, että käyttäytymiskulttuurille juoksuhaudoissa. Tulokset viittaavat myös siihen, että siinä missä jokaisen sotilaan sotakokemus oli osaltaan hyvin yksilöllinen, olivat monet sen piirteistä kulttuurisesti ja psykologisesti informoituja ja täten ollen edes jokseenkin ennustettavissa. Tutkimuksen viiteryhmän sisältä voisi löytää siis johdonmukaisuuksia, jotka edelleen voisivat ymmärrettyinä auttaa modernin sodankäynnin kokemusta vastaavanlaisissa kenttäympäristöissä laajemmassakin perspektiivissä.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords

The Great War, Great Britain, Kitchener's Army, Psychology, Sociology, Twentieth Century, Combat, Military, Middle Class, Stress, Violence, Defense Mechanisms, Coping Mechanisms, Soldier Letters, Soldier Diaries

Säilytyspaikka – Förvaringställe – Where deposited

Muita tietoja – Övriga uppgifter – Additional information

HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO
HELSINGFORS UNIVERSITET
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

Tiedekunta/Osasto – Fakultet/Sektion – Faculty	Laitos – Institution – Department
Faculty of Arts	Department of Philosophy, History, Culture and Art Studies

Tekijä – Författare – Author

Annika Pöysä

Työn nimi – Arbetets titel – Title

The psychological battlefield – Lord Kitchener's middle-class volunteers in the Great War

Oppiaine – Läroämne – Subject

General history

Työn laji – Arbetets art – Level	Aika – Datum – Month and year	Sivumäärä– Sidoantal – Number of pages
Master's Thesis	September 2017	75p. + appendices

Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract

This Master's Thesis concerns the British middle-class soldiers' psychological experience as volunteers in Kitchener's army during the Great War. The purpose of this study is to discover how the war affected the soldiers, and why they reacted to it the way they did. It approaches this question by focusing on four aspects of the war from the soldier's perspective, namely: the military organization, his brothers in arms, the act of killing, and the threat of dying. The motivation behind this study was to better understand the experience of these soldiers after they voluntarily joined the world's first industrial war.

Kitchener's army was an army of civilian soldiers, drafted to fill in the ranks of the British army, so that it could properly take part in the war. Through using both relevant historical literature and psychological research as aid, the study uses primary sources in the form of letters and diaries from the trenches to understand and draw conclusions of the experiences personally recounted by the soldiers. The methods with which the study was conducted was through the close-reading of the sources combined with the reading and reviewing of relevant research literature to draw appropriate conclusions. The theoretical framework and subsequent analysis of the sources thus relies heavily on psychological concepts.

The concept of masculinity in the contemporary middle-class culture was used to contextualize the soldiers' experience in their historical timeframe and social niche. Meanwhile, the key psychological terms used in this study in reference to group behavior and stress responses are concepts recognized on the field of psychological research either as defense or coping mechanisms. Where defense mechanisms are commonly understood as unconscious and automatic reactions of the mind to potentially stressful information, coping mechanisms are at least partially consciously driven and maintained by the person themselves to help them refrain from having to face and process the information which they know to be painful.

The conclusions of this study imply that the soldier's social background influenced their war experience both before and after joining the war, giving them a frame of reference for both their set of values and their code of conduct which they drew upon as they adjusted to the life in the trenches. What this study's results also imply is that while the soldiers had distinctly individual experiences of their own, they were characterized by a set of culturally and psychologically guided features, which hold within themselves a level of predictability. These conclusions suggest that though each experience of soldiers in war is unique, there are broader patterns of behavior within the context of modern warfare, which if understood, could better help predict and understand the behavior of soldiers in comparable circumstances.

Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords

The Great War, Great Britain, Kitchener's Army, Psychology, Sociology, Twentieth Century, Combat, Military, Middle Class, Stress, Violence, Defense Mechanisms, Coping Mechanisms, Soldier Letters, Soldier Diaries

Säilytyspaikka – Förvaringställe – Where deposited

Muita tietoja – Övriga uppgifter – Additional information

“The starting point for the understanding of war is the understanding of human nature.”

− S. L. A. Marshall in *Men against fire*.

Table of contents

1. Introduction

"War always interested me: not war in the sense of maneuvers devised by great generals … but the reality of war, the actual killing. I was more interested to know in what way and under the influence of what feeling one soldier kills another than to know how the armies were arranged at Austerlitz and Borodino."

- Leo Tolstoy.[1]

1.1. Research Question and Context

This study is about the British middle-class men who, upon the outbreak of the Great War, volunteered in lord Kitchener's Army during the years 1914–16 before the nation turned to conscription in 1916 for the lack of willing fighting-aged men as they continued to perish on the battlefields.[2] Kitchener's army was an army of civilian soldiers, drafted to fill in the ranks of the – at the time – inadequately sized British army.[3] The call to arms was made by the newly appointed Secretary of War, Lord Kitchener, whose name was consequently carried by the newly formed troops. The Great War is recognized as the first industrial war, and it is a unique event to study from the grassroots perspective, as both the outdated British military organization and the civilian soldiers themselves had to learn and adapt to the ways of modern warfare as they went along. For the British, it was the largest war in history by almost any measure, mobilizing a total of 5,7 million men over the course of its four-year duration.[4] It was also the first time that Britain fought a war with armies made up mostly of volunteers and conscripts, drafted to fill and replace the ranks of the professional army that preceded the Great War.[5] This study will examine the war in its entirety – as far as the British were concerned – from 1914 to 1918. The main emphasis will however be on the first two years of the war, during which Kitchener's volunteers were the most prominent part of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) fighting on the Western Front. The purpose of this study is to understand *how the war affected the soldiers, and why they reacted to it the way they did.*

Before the Great War, military historians seldom concerned themselves with the question of war from the point of view of combatants. Following the Thucydidean tradition, which deals with the observable reality of battles as events and the wider societal and political

[1] In the foreword to The Raid in Tolstoy, Maude 1999, 1.
[2] Ferguson 2003, 198.
[3] Or more precisely a collection of armies, as the influx of volunteers made for several army-sized units. Simkins 2007, 39.
[4] Holmes 2004, 138.
[5] In 1914 The British Army consisted of three, initially distinct, types of units – Regular, Territorial, and New (or 'Kitchener's') Army – the last of which is discussed in this study.

implications of conflicts, the human cost of war in these histories has mostly been present in casualty figures.[6] Within this framework, the only immaterial concept of any significance that directly relates to the soldiers has been *morale*, regarded mostly through its tactical utility as an asset that, should it be ensured, can be taken advantage of for maximum material gain.[7] Though this dispassionate tradition of military history has never been completely abandoned, the Great War brought in its wake a new perspective to the study of warfare, consequently reshaping the understanding of the relationship between war and its combatants. This new branch of military history, which provides the framework for this study as well, has shifted the focus from recording armed conflict and their impact on societies to the level of the combatants themselves as they are affected by the realities of war.

Over the course of the century since the end of the Great War, its events have been overlaid with scores of interpretations and narratives so ingrained in the general consciousness that their objectivity can be difficult to gauge. Partially due to this pitfall of an established narrative especially in the British context, those who seek to understand the soldiers' experience on their own terms can and *have* fallen prey to the soldiers' inspired descriptions of the battlefield if the impression given has been favorable to their own research agenda.[8] Samuel Hynes, one of the more prestigious of the 'modern war' historians, has introduced the idea that if you added up all the stories told by soldiers about modern war, you would end up with one master narrative – the one tale about the other-worldliness of war.[9] This notion distills the approach taken by many of the historians who focus on the psychological and sociological sides of the Great War: First, the voices of individuals are emphasized; and second, from the individual voices a unifying narrative is sought out – a story to answer one's question in a manner that would reveal something profound about the nature of war.[10] It is in this desire, unconscious or not, where the greatest risk of error lies for studies that follow this historiographical tradition; and simply by the virtue of trying to answer the question 'why' certain events occurred, this study is not immune to this risk either.

[6] Of the 5,7 million Britons who served in the war, Britain lost approximately 11,8 percent, and by the end of the war as much 43 percent had become casualties (including the wounded, missing, and captured). See Watson 2008, 20.
[7] Grinker & Spiegel defined morale as 'the psychological forces within a combat group which impel its members to get into the fight', and it is this vision which defines the use of the word in this study as well. See Grinker & Spiegel 1945.
[8] Paul Fussell has often been at the specifically harsh receiving end of this criticism, likely due to how ubiquitously quoted his book The Great War and Modern Memory has become.
[9] Winter & Prost 2005, 182.
[10] Special attention is usually also given to the view of combatants as humans first, soldiers second.

The psychological experience of the middle-class soldiers in Kitchener's army was the result of their cultural context acting as influence in conjunction with the unconscious psychological mechanisms which manifest themselves under certain circumstances mostly regardless of the person's social context.[11] The world which Kitchener's middle-class volunteers left behind as they joined the war was designed to answer to their most basic needs. Their civilian selves' primary concerns likely stemmed from questions of their social status, as they were judged upon the nature of their character, which was in turn measured by how they adhered to the contemporary values of the British middle class. During the war, they had to adopt a soldier's identity alongside their civilian selves, which in turn was shaped by the social circumstances of the front and the contemporary military culture. Their reactions to the following wartime events reflect the intermingling of both identities. At the same time, both before and especially during the war these men were subject to psychological mechanisms which guided their reactions and behavior in relation to their environment. The interplay between the soldiers' mental processes and their conscious decisions deriving from the values which they had adopted through their cultural upbringing created their war experience, nuanced and apart from all other groups of soldiers who shared the Western Front with them.

Wars have all but vanished, and thus the psychological experience of soldiers in the Great War is an important topic for historians to re-examine in the light of modern research to better understand the course, the outcome, and the aftermath of the war. Furthermore, it is also a critical area of study to further the understanding about how the soldiers' experience was shaped by the conjoined effects of their broader cultural context and the biological mechanisms which have influenced people in history regardless of time and place – now that the science of psychology has taken several leaps forward during the last few decades. However, as a result of the limitations and challenges of the primary sources, and of psychology not being an exact science, the interpretations of the historians who have chosen this theoretical framework have not always aligned with each other. The soldier's experience from the psychologically charged perspective has recently been studied by historians such as Joanna Bourke, Niall Ferguson, and Alexander Watson. Though all three and others who have chosen this approach have somewhat varying interpretations of the psychological implications of the soldiers' self-narrated experiences, they nevertheless have also all on their part captured some essential features

[11] In the context of this study, these instances will mostly involve group dynamics and stressful combat environment.

of the Kitchener's soldiers war experience and brought it into the academic discussion, which had previously been saturated by the traditional narrative of the Great War. On this merit alone, further research of the source material and the examination of these questions by drawing upon the previous perspectives is warranted.

The traditional narrative of the Great War in Britain, which evolved into a cultural consciousness focusing on the 'lunacy' of the war, can be detected back to the disillusionment that engulfed the nation after the glow of victory had faded and the public was left with a lot of resentment towards the overall human price of the war.[12] The way the war was treated by the press, politicians, and by popular authors transformed after the war from the shared patriotic ethos into criticism that had received no platform while the war was still going on. In the prevailing atmosphere, the public was eager to latch onto eloquent aphorisms such as poet Ted Hughes' remark that Britain's victory in the Great War was 'no victory at all, rather it was a defeat around whose neck someone stuck a victory medal.'[13] Great War historian John Keegan's *Face of battle* first published in 1976 arguably started the historiographical tradition of making the soldier – specifically his behavior in battle – a central question in the writing of the histories of the Great War.[14] More recent historians have begun to give more attention not just to their behavior, but their emotional world as well, which subsequently challenged these previous notions of the war's ubiquitous catatonia.[15] They have veered from the more pessimistic analyses as they have re-examined the sources and made novel interpretations emphasizing the positive (or at least, manageable) aspects of the war in favour of the traditional narrative. While some historians have drawn conclusions of soldiers genuinely enjoying the war, this study follows the more moderate path of the Great War revisionists, of which Alexander Watson is one of the best examples: After studying both the British and German armies in the Great War, he nevertheless concluded that while the conditions were by and large abhorrent to the combatants, in the end they endured remarkably well.[16]

The aim of this study is to examine the soldiers' experience in the trenches of the Western Front and to discover the reasons for their reactions to the war. After the Introduction, it approaches this question by focusing on the two most significant external factors which

[12] Winter & Prost 2005, 183. Keegan 2011, 315.
[13] Winter & Prost 2005, 190.
[14] ibid., 27.
[15] See Bourke 2000; Winter 1988; Grossman 1995; etc.
[16] Watson 2008, 43.

affected the soldiers' war circumstances in a by-and-large positive or sustaining way in Chapter 2 (*the military organization* and *their brothers in arms*), after which their reactions the two most prominent battlefield stressors in Chapter 3 (*the act of killing* and *the threat of dying*) are examined. The concepts of psychological defense and coping mechanisms are carried throughout the study, and the interpretations of the soldiers' reactions are therefore tied to them at every turn, in accordance to the study's theoretical framework.

1.2. Theoretical Framework and Method

Historians have always been partial to the long running psychological debate of *nature versus nurture* by striving to understand certain events through the interplay of culture and the universal features of humanity.[17] This study's theoretical framework draws from a psycho-sociological tradition of historiography, examining how various features of the Great War were received by the soldiers, and whether they weighed on the soldiers' psyche and enacted as hardships to overcome, or as support which helped them endure the more stressful aspects of their war experience. This approach relies on modern research on both the cognitive processes of an individual, and of larger group dynamics and their effects on the group's members. History is however not – neither does it attempt to be – a branch of psychology. Ute Frevert, a specialist in the history of emotions, has elaborated the relationship of the two fields regarding historical research:

> Historians differ from present-day psychologists in the fact that they pay more attention to social emotions and how these play out in relational and collective settings. While most branches of psychology focus on the individual person who is, however, stripped of all individual traits and peculiarities, history looks at individuals in their capacity as members of social groups and institutions, as bearers of culture, as subjects of and to power.[18]

As such, the way this study approaches the relationship between cultural and biological influencers is grounded in the social context of the middle-class soldiers in Kitchener's army, using psychological research only as a tool of acquiring a more comprehensive understanding of the soldiers' experience in the trenches of the Western Front.

This theoretical framework is especially suited to analyzing the study's primary sources by minding the biases implicit in the soldiers' self-written records, which may have

[17] The debate boils down to whether human behavior is determined by a person's environment, or by their genes.
[18] Frevert 2011, 24.

resulted from their cultural norms and subsequent unconscious psychological reactions to the described events. Regarding this study's sources, the context of the Great War brings with it a demand for a highlighted attention to the effects of the latter. Michael Roper, a historian who specializes in psychological questions of trauma and war, has declared that historians of trench warfare 'have not properly appreciated the psychological imperatives of writing and the range of emotions that trench warfare could arouse.'[19] In stating this, he was emphasizing the importance of literary analysis on the primary sources from the trenches, but the statement also implies that an understanding of combat psychology has the potential to provide additional insight to the analysis of the soldiers' texts. The most important benefit to using this framework to study the soldiers' accounts of their Great War experience is thus to gain a deeper understanding of what the soldiers were undergoing by being able to detect the unconscious mechanisms guiding the soldiers' reactions to their circumstances, despite of their own obliviousness to them. For example, in a statement similar in fashion to Roper's, historian of psychology Edgar Jones has observed regarding the question of killing in combat that readers cannot be certain that an author is sending a straightforward message, when the subject matter is as emotive as this.[20] As such, it is left for the historian to do their best to get to the implicit messages in the soldiers' writings.

The key terms used in this study in reference to the psychological phenomena of group behavior and stress responses are concepts recognized on the field of psychological research either as *defense* or *coping mechanisms*. Where defense mechanisms are commonly understood as unconscious and automatic reactions of the mind to potentially stressful information, coping mechanisms are at least partially consciously driven and maintained by the person themselves to help them refrain from having to face and process the information which they know to be painful.[21] Based on modern psychological research and the knowledge of the social context of the British middle-class soldiers, few of the most common defense and coping mechanisms have been identified and will frequently be referred to in this study. Most of these mechanisms fall under the broader concept of *cognitive dissonance* and they are, in no particular order: Rationalization,

[19] Roper 2011, 430.
[20] Jones 2006, 233.
[21] Cramer 1998, 919–946.

group absolution, obedience to authority, enmification, positive illusions, religion/superstition, humour, and desensitization.[22]

Rationalization is a process which reduces cognitive dissonance or moral inconsistencies caused by soldier's own actions by providing seemingly rational justifications for them.[23] *Group absolution* is a concept that helps explain how individual soldiers bring themselves to commit acts of violence as parts of a group, through simultaneously providing a sense of accountability and anonymity.[24] *Obedience to authority* as a concept has its origins in the infamous Milgram experiment, and it suggests an inherent tendency of humans to follow the orders of established authority figures, and as a result wash their hands of any subsequent guilt.[25] *Enmification* is the process through which people dehumanize their adversaries and create psychological distance between themselves and their enemies.[26] *Positive illusions* are a cognitive bias which made the soldiers overestimate their chances of survival or otherwise view their circumstances in an unrealistically optimistic light.[27] *Religion* guarded the soldiers with a sense of security in an ultimate 'plan' for them, rather than them having to succumb to nihilism, while *superstition* gave them the impression that their survival was a matter of sticking to rituals. *Humour* is a way for people to communicate things which they cannot address in any other way, and as such provides a way of processing them without directly addressing their severity.[28] Finally, *desensitization* refers to the decreasing of either certain emotions, or of a disconnect with one's ethical sensibilities.[29]

The research method used in this study follows the example of most of the other studies conducted about the soldiers of the Great War within the research tradition which focuses on individual soldiers' experiences. Beginning with the close-reading of the letters and diaries left behind by the soldiers, their accounts are contextualized through historical

[22] The term cognitive dissonance refers to the mental tension experienced by an individual who holds contradictory beliefs, ideas, values, or preferences at the same time. See Alós-Ferrer 2016, 324.
[23] For soldiers in war, rationalization process enables them to regain control of their reality, and allows them to move forward without being burdened by their reactions and actions. See Sekerdej 2016, 1435.
[24] Accountability to one's comrades, and anonymity concerning the responsibility for the group's actions. See Bennett 2016, 735–6.
[25] In the test, the psychologist Stanley Milgram succeeded in a laboratory experiment to coerce sixty-five percent of his participants into giving an imaginary (unbeknownst to them) victim a deadly electrical shock, See Dietrich 2016, 1063.
[26] Enmification as a coping mechanism in combat works to help soldiers construct distance between themselves and their enemies, which is crucial to be able to take part in the killing of said adversaries. See Sion 2016, 559.
[27] In the absence of a promise of security, certainty, and control in the practical world, men easily turned to the supernatural for comfort. See Watson 2008, 98.
[28] By defining humour as an element of communication and by thinking of resilience as a communication phenomenon, humour and resilience become linked. See Henman 2001, 89–94.
[29] Sometimes referred to as 'numbing', desensitization can either be voluntary reaction, a deliberate avoidance of certain traumatic triggers, or an involuntary one, relying on instinctive or unconscious avoidance mechanisms. See Isaac 2016, 487.

research literature about the war and the surrounding time period. The sources are then interpreted through both what knowledge of human psyche and behavior has been gained by modern psychological research, and the implications of the soldiers' cultural context on their reactions to the war. While a handful of primary sources cannot be used to generalize the experience of whole armies, or even just the parts of it which consisted of British middle-class combatants, this method brings the historian as close to the actual experiences as they can get. By combining the information acquired from the primary sources with both the broader historiographical context of the Great War and the knowledge of the cognitive mechanisms of the human mind, this study aims to detect the larger trends of the studied theme of human experience in trench warfare, and contextualize them through the culture of the studied individuals. The cultural memory of the Great War intertwines history and literature in such a way that, in the words of the acclaimed military historian Richard Holmes, the war 'usually enters our minds not as history, but as literature.'[30] This intermingling suggests the mutual importance of both historiography and literary scholarship in understanding the writings that the war generated.

In seeking to answer specific questions about the soldiers either as individuals or as members of a group, the Great War historians have produced different points of interest of the human mind and the social spheres that they have concentrated on: While John Keegan approached the dynamics of the trenches to explain why soldiers were prepared to fight, Tony Ashworth focused on the sociological aspects of the battlefield to explain the relationship between its soldiers on different sides of the conflict.[31] In the meantime, several historians have studied the national character and the social structures of the pre-war European nations on their quest to find out the reasons for the outcome of the war.[32] This study's approach to its research question mirrors Alexander Watson's approach to his own study, in which he suggests that the soldiers' social influences coloured rather than shaped their psychological coping strategies on the field.[33] As such, it emphasizes the intrinsic psychological mechanisms of the soldiers to their circumstances, but minds the influences of their middle-class background to distinguish their experience from all others who fought in the war. This theoretical framework is well-equipped to answer this

[30] Holmes 2004, xvii.
[31] Keegan 1978, 207–89; Ashworth 1980.
[32] See Sheffield 2000, 72–3; Winter 1988, 159.
[33] Watson 2008, 8.

study's main research question as it inquiries about the *reactions* of the soldiers to their circumstances, which are inherently grounded in their instincts and accumulated knowledge of the world.

1.3. Key Research Literature and Source Material

The primary sources analyzed in this study are the letters and diaries written by the British middle-class infantry soldiers while serving in the British Expeditionary Force on the Western Front. The Imperial War Museum in London has a national archive of unpublished war letters and diaries from this period, and their research room and staff were invaluable for the conducting of this study. Additionally, many of the soldiers' accounts were published in the interwar period as an answer to the interest of the general public, despite it taking until the latter half of the century for the historians to express interest in the story told by the soldiers themselves.[34] A large number of these accounts have since been digitized and uploaded by various archives, and are thus made easily accessible as well. Similar accounts of individual soldiers have also been continued to be transcribed and published over the century since the war, and some of these more recent publications of texts dating back to the war have also been utilized for the purposes of this study. Retrospective soldier memoirs, which gained popularity during the latter half of the century, were also discriminately used, with additional emphasis on the questions of their publication motivations and narrative intents, which were likely more influenced by the politics and historiographical traditions around the time of publication compared to the accounts which were published during or soon after the war was over. The two conditions which most influenced the decision over which sources were included in this study concerned *when* the accounts were written, and by *whom*: Most of the sources date back to the years 1914-1918 (even if some of them were published much later), and they were written by members of the infantry in Kitchener's army who as civilians belonged to the British middle-class.

[34] The absence of combat and combatants in the first decades of the Great War historiography is the result of the contemporary historians being too occupied with viewing the war from above: From the perspective of politics, diplomacy and generals. See Winter & Prost 2005, 13–4.

Perhaps surprisingly, one of the distinguishing features of British historiography of the trenches is that it has largely focused the experiences of the working-class soldiers.[35] The decision to restrict the study's focus group to middle-class men without a colonial background was both a deviation from this tradition, as well as a pragmatic choice of narrowing down the sphere of cultural influences which could have guided the soldiers' attitudes and reactions to certain events. Britain in 1914 was arguably the most class-conscious nation in Europe, and the differences between working and middle-class members of the British society were large enough to suggest a whole different culture.[36] Nativity to a colony of Great Britain can similarly be seen as a heavy influence on a person's cultural background, which led to the decision of excluding sources written by colonial troops. Not only were members of different societal groups segregated through the social norms they ascribed to, they also received differential treatment to each other from other members of society. At the time, even attempting to understand a different class members' point of view could prove difficult: A case well-exemplified before the war by the young middle-class recruit Donald Hankey who, when he wished to study authentic working-class life and had to conclude that it would be impossible for him to do so in England, due to the chasm which existed between the classes everywhere in society.[37]

Because the concept of 'middle class' has had varying meanings moving from one era and cultural area to another, its usage in this context warrants a disambiguation. The following excerpt from Jürgen Kocka's book *The Middle Class in Europe* describes the term as it is used in this study's context:

> The concept "middle class" comprises merchants, manufacturers, bankers, capitalists, entrepreneurs, and managers, as well as rentiers, together with their families … It also comprises the families of doctors, lawyers, ministers, scientists and other professionals, professors of universities and secondary schools, intellectuals, men and women of letters, and academics, including those who serve as administrators and officials in public and private bureaucracies.[38]

As such, the definition excludes both nobility, lower-middle class people comprising of low- and middle-ranking salaried employees, and the masses of lower-class people in general. It should be noted, however, that even within the focus group of this study there

[35] Most British historians seem to have been eager to hear the voices of the working-class, likely partially due to the fact that the historiographical shift which had lingered on the level of generals and politicians until the 1960's was willingly brought to the 'lowest' possible level by focusing on the working-class soldiers. Winter & Prost 2005, 94.
[36] ibid.
[37] Instead he emigrated to Australia for a while to achieve his goal, and even then, reported to having succeeded only to 'a very limited extent'. See Hankey 1917, 318.
[38] Kocka 1995, 784.

existed a myriad of ways in which people experienced the Great War. Factors such as the personalities of the soldiers would have undoubtedly created differences in the perception of individuals of discernibly comparable circumstances and backgrounds. Meanwhile, the decision to restrict this study's perspective to the members of the infantry was a purely practical decision rising from the decision to study the trenches as battlefield environment, which the Western Front is still most famous for.

The primary sources of this study can be divided into three distinct categories; letters from the front, trench diaries, and war memoirs. The key to interpreting letters and diaries is understanding that the only real difference between them is their audience. Letters are often and correctly viewed as narratives meant to convey a certain image of the writer's character to the receiver; while the author of a diary is comparatively narrating a story of themselves *to* themselves. The motive for both still stems from the desire to validate and make sense of their own character through a coherent story. When the soldiers had time to write during the quiet periods of frontline service, they were attempting to construct a narrative which made the most sense to them. As this study is centered around answering the questions of how and why soldiers reacted to the trench environment of the Western Front, the way these topics were handled in the soldiers' immediate accounts are viewed through the context of the highly traumatic events they involved. As primary sources, war letters and diaries provide as close a look into the soldiers' psyche on the battlefield as the historian can achieve.

Meanwhile, war memoirs are retrospective accounts written sometimes years after the events themselves, and thus they the authors can be expected to have had adequate amount of time in constructing a coherent narrative. Memory is always partially constructed, based on the information that remains in the long-term memory, the general knowledge of the reminiscer, and the social demands at the time of memory retrieval of the author. Thus, memories will often contain errors, and clichés present in the archetypal examples of stories similar to the ones remembered.[39] Biographer Doris Lessing described the problems which arise out of studying the Great War from the perspective of memoirs as she described how her own father, a veteran of the Great War, used to reminisce:

[39] Hyman & Loftus 1998.

> His war memories were congealed in stories that he told again and again, with the same words and gestures, in stereotyped phrases. They were anonymous, general, as if they had come out of a communal war memoir. He met a German in no man's land, but both slowly lowered their rifles and smiled and walked away. The Tommies were the salt of the earth, the British fighting man the best in the world. He had never known such comradeship.[40]

In the Great War historiography, however, all three types of primary sources have traditionally been used together by historians to interpret the trench experience from the soldiers' perspective. Their literary analysis in this study is supported by historical research into the cultural context of the war on various time periods, and psychological research which helps to understand the psychological mechanisms dictating the soldiers' immediate reactions as partially subconscious actors.

The historical research literature in this study is used to contextualize the research question within its wider historiographical context, as well as to see how the study's central theme of human experience in the trenches has been approached by historians. Out of the historical literature used in the conducting of this study, the Great War historian Alexander Watson's study *Enduring the Great War. Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914-1918* is the most nominal one, as his research approach most closely aligns with this study's thematic framework by emphasizing the intermingling of the soldiers' cultural context with their psychological realities.[41] The authors who most helped to contextualize the primary sources within the larger context of the Western Front and the surrounding cultural environment were Richard Holmes with his book *Tommy: the British soldier on the Western Front, 1914-1918* and Peter Simkins with his book *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies 1914-1916.*[42] Additionally, the discourse between different interpretations of the soldiers' experience benefited greatly from the works of Niall Ferguson, Joanna Bourke, Edgar Jones, Denis Winter, and Dave Grossman to name a few. They and many others provided this study with their respective perspectives on the psychology of the trenches from a historian's perspective, and brought new angles to either contest or align with.[43] Finally, this study would not have been possible without the numerous psychological studies primarily from the field of military psychology, which have accumulated over the years ever since the Great War started up the interest towards soldier endurance and combat behavior on a larger scale.

[40] Doris Lessing quoted in Bourke 2004, 478.
[41] Watson 2008.
[42] Holmes 2004; Simkins 2007.
[43] Bourke 2000; Bourke 2005; Jones 2006; Grossman 1995.

2. The Respite of War

"An army, like any other human society, is an organism, whose well-being depends on the interplay of human relationships."

- Great War officer A.D. Thorburn.[44]

2.1. The Military Organization

When the Great War broke out in 1914, Britain originally had around a hundred thousand professional soldiers employed in the reserves. By the end of the first year of fighting, most of them had become incapable of continuing to fight either by dying off, or becoming war casualties of other kind. This shortage of men had already been anticipated before it occurred, and the reason for lord Kitchener's call for volunteers at the very beginning of the war was primarily to help Britain remain in the war by ensuring it would not run out of fighting men.[45] Within the first month after Britain joined the war, Kitchener called for a total of two hundred thousand men to volunteer for his new army, yet by the end of the month, he had already raised three hundred thousand.[46] Ultimately, he would end up with two and a half million volunteers, of which twenty-nine percent joined within the first eight weeks of the war.[47] Captain A.P.B. Irwin, who had made a career serving in the Regular Army, while he was overseeing the training of some of the Kitchener's volunteers observed that 'they arrived, a thousand strong, with no officers, no non-commissioned officers – rather like a football excursion crowd.'[48] Another Regular Army officer described the unexpected and sudden influx by saying that 'it was impossible to prevent new recruits coming. A company would start a route march 300 strong and return with 310, and no one knew or could find out who were the new men.'[49] The middle-class draftees within this crowd came to occupy both the roles of officers and of the other ranks, and all of them had to be familiarized with the military institution and trained to be functional and ready soldiers for when they inevitably had to join the battle.

In retrospect, it should not have been so surprising that the generations of twentieth century middle-class Britons were so eager to volunteer when they were called upon. For decades prior to the ignition of the Great War, British middle-class culture had been

[44] Thorburn 1933, 5.
[45] Simkins 2007, 39.
[46] Ferguson 2003, 198.
[47] Around 25 percent of the male population who were eligible to fight, See Ferguson 2003, 198.
[48] Lieutenant-Colonel A.P.B. Irwin, quoted in Cecil & Liddle 2003, 298.
[49] Account by Major H.P Berney-Ficklin, quoted in Cecil & Liddle 2003, 298.

saturated by casual militarism, with young boys on the streets dressing up in sailor uniforms, and popular cigarette manufacturers including cards depicting famous generals and admirals in their packages.[50] The militarization of British society before the Great War has been a contested topic between historians, but even Niall Ferguson, who has criticized what he calls the 'myths of militarism' in Britain at the time, has admitted that the middle-class men seem to have been 'keener to fight' than others.[51] This was undoubtedly partially because the values of militarism were especially appealing to the prevailing middle-class values of hard work, sports, emotional control, masculinity, and honour.[52] These values had a specifically effective platform of generational transmission in the public-school system of contemporary Britain, which had become particularly popular with the middle class, and has been speculated to have been the most significant unifying and exclusive experience for this class during the early twentieth century.[53] George Orwell, who himself was educated in Eton during the war, would go on to say that the British middle classes at the time were trained for war, 'not technically, but morally.'[54] With this he indicated that the ideological messages of the education put soldierly virtues on a pedestal, and emphasized the superiority of the British nation.

Since Britain's public schools were – contrary to the misleading name – privately owned with considerable admission fees, they were not a realistic option for the working classes; therefore, their purpose became disseminating the values of the upper and middle classes to the new generations.[55] By the beginning of the twentieth century, there already existed a mutually fostered, tight link between the public schools and Britain's War Office. A great majority of army officers were since the beginning of the century recruited through open competitive examinations, which required secondary level education in public schools for any realistic possibility of passing.[56] This situation was deliberately engineered by the army. It was also enforced by the State's public-school organization; by the army gearing their examinations to fit the school curriculum, and the curriculum being vice versa adjusted to fit the army's requirements.[57] The public-school education in

[50] Otley 1978, 382; MacMillan 2013, 277.
[51] Ferguson 2003, 199.
[52] Kocka 1975, 786–787. *Militarization* here meaning the encroaching of military forms, personnel and practices upon civilian institutions or social orders. See Otley 1978, 322.
[53] Kocka 1975, 792.
[54] George Orwell quoted in Sheffield 2000, 53.
[55] Kocka 1975, 793.
[56] Otley 1978, 382.
[57] Military training was provided within the public schools since I860, with it reaching a systematic national foothold in 1908 through the implementation of the nationally organized system of junior units of the O.T.C. (Officer's Training Corps). See Otley 1978, 382.

pre-war Britain was a fitting predecessor to the military organization as it was, above all else, aimed to make their students *tough*. John Honey, who has studied the British education of the time, has stated that there was 'nothing 'soft', nothing 'permissive', nothing egalitarian; nothing remotely 'child-centered'' in the public schools at the time.[58] The underlying message was that life was a hard struggle, and boys had to prepare for that struggle from early on.[59] It could be interpreted that – whether conscious or not – these boys were already being groomed into miniature soldiers. John Hay Beith belonged in the first of the Kitchener's volunteers, and thus had a good vantage point of the initial training period the army had to offer. And indeed, he later recounted that his first days of service reminded him much of one's first schooldays in Fettes College – and how there was the same fear of transgressing the unaltering and strict conventions of the formidable organization.[60]

Britain's nationalism was not as associated with militarism as, for instance, Prussia's. The imperial prowess of Britain was oriented towards its economic dominance over much of the world, in contrast to belligerent success within the European theatre.[61] However, coming to the twentieth century, its neighbours' martial posturing had a detrimental influence on the general sense of national safety. The fact that Britain was simultaneously being forced to acknowledge the capabilities of other non-European powers as well, did nothing to put the public's minds at rest either.[62] The fuel which kept militarism on the surface during this time and sold itself to the masses were the values which it courted – the same values that were deeply imprinted into the minds of people through their social norms already. Militarism wasn't a revolutionary ideology to suggest that enforcing militaristic virtues in culture and education would rebuild the backbone of the faltering and feminizing British nation, which had begun to be described by some as a 'weary Titan, staggering under the too-vast orb of his fate.'[63] Instead it was the ideology which felt just right at the time to answer to the growing doubts of national security, identity crises, and the nostalgia of days gone past. In this way, it got its foot in into the system in a way that let it not just reflect what people were already thinking, but manipulate it as well. Because of this cultural context, the ideas fostered about war upon its outbreak –

[58] Honey 1979, 25.
[59] Frevert 2011, 128.
[60] Hay 1916, 37. Beith wrote under the pen name Ian Hay, which is also printed on the cover of his book.
[61] Blom 2010, 179.
[62] ibid., 181.
[63] Joseph Chamberlain in his 1902 speech quoted in MacMillan 2013, 41.

especially those by the younger recruits – were often highly glorified. The Great War represented a chance for them to redeem their place as men of 'character' in an age where opportunities for this were proving to be quite scarce despite of the emphasis on the importance of these qualities.

When the country mobilized, Bertrand Russell, already then a public intellectual, discovered to his horror that 'average men and women were delighted at the prospect of war.'[64] Though the popular ideals had been shifting towards a more militarist nation, the initial reactions to an international war were still shocking to many influential members of Britain, who had not been mindful enough of the social undercurrents. On the surface, the working-class men cited 'duty' and 'obligation' as their main reasons for joining, while the middle and upper classes repeated the words 'honour' and 'sacrifice' in their ethos reminiscent of that of medieval knights.[65] The sense of duty for their country of the middle-class men was less pronounced and matter-of-fact than their working-class contemporaries. However, the very concept of *noblesse oblige,* which many of them adhered to as their reason for joining the war, holds within itself a sense of upper class obligation to pick up the arms and uphold the values which distinguish them from the rest of society. The idea which most prominently influenced the middle-class' decision to go to war was that it was their duty to protect, and this sense of duty rose from the actions and rumoured actions of German soldiers when they invaded Belgium. The concept of war had not yet fit into Arthur Gibbs' future plans when the talk of volunteering became relevant; he was soon to leave Europe, and was much more interested in the prospects of his personal career as a writer:

> England was at war. The Army would be buckling on its sword, running out its guns; the Navy clearing decks for action. It was their job, not mine … War, as such, was something which I had never considered as having any personal meaning for me.[66]

What ultimately changed his mind was a discussion he had with a lady friend of his in a train coach, as he related the news of the fate of the Belgians coming across the channel to the potential fate of his valued friend and her family:

> But day by day the grey wave swept on, tearing down all veils from before the altar of reality. Belgian women were not merely bayoneted … Suppose I had returned to New York and the Germans had jumped the tiny Channel and "bayoneted" her and her children? Could I ever call myself a man again?[67]

[64] Ferguson 2003, 176.
[65] Winter 1979, 32.
[66] Gibbs 1920, 3–4.
[67] ibid., 4–5.

Soon after this event he took a taxi to London and promptly drafted. His reaction is telling of the value structures and the following social pressure at place in the contemporary British society. Had Gibbs not stayed to fight, he would not have been viewed as less of a man only in his own eyes. According to Ute Frevert, 'violating the honour of the enemy's wives and daughters was not only an attack on husbands and fathers. It was meant and perceived to target and damage the honour of the whole nation.'[68] The 'rape of Belgium' was thus a prime incentive for wartime collectivism among the middle-class, and provided them with the moral justification for battle, which would be useful for their psychological wellbeing later on when they had to partake in abhorrent duties of war themselves.

However, many public-school volunteers had a diminished interest in the reasons of the war and saw it less as a duty and more as *exactly* the way to pursue their personal aspirations.[69] Philip Blom has assessed the generation of middle-class youth before the outbreak of the Great War by stating that 'never before had there been so much reason to be optimistic, and never before had people looked towards the future with stronger misgivings.'[70] This generation wished to rebel against the *status quo* but had, at the same time, been fostered by nineteenth century establishments that equipped them with a value system that could not find its release in the cage of progressive thinking they had trapped themselves within. When the war broke out, these middle-class sons were less familiar and less interested with the political reasons behind the conflict, rather than what the idea of a righteous war represented for them.[71] For this generation, war was a platform for absolution. The sentiments of this particular section of the population were best visualized by the quickly famous war poet and soldier Rupert Brooke, who proclaimed: 'We who have known shame, we have found release there.'[72] Volunteering for them was a way out without having to neither overhaul their values nor fall in line with the path laid out to them by their parents' generation. Rupert Brooke understood this, and called out to other young men like him that they could join the war "as swimmers into cleanness leaping, glad from a world grown old and cold and weary."[73] He never wrote about his own experiences on the front in his poems, choosing to focus on the anticipation of the war

[68] Frevert 2011, 74.
[69] Ferguson 2003, 202.
[70] Blom 2010, 395.
[71] Wohl 1979, 92.
[72] Rupert Brooke's poem 'Peace' quoted by Stallworthy 2014, 16.
[73] ibid.

instead and encapsulating the fervent with which he and many of his middle-class peers entered the service. He would not live long enough to see this collective flame extinguish once many of Kitchener's volunteers were finally able to admit that the War was not everything it was initially measured out to be, dying of food-poisoning in the trenches in 1915.[74]

When the fresh recruits moved from their homes to the army, they were met with a whole other world. The volunteers who poured in, whether as directly commissioned officers or as 'rankers', everyone had to go through similar training camps before being sent to the fronts. Arthur Gibbs recalled with humour how the last time a sergeant had called him a 'sir' for a very long time was upon asking him to undress for inspection in the recruitment office he'd entered when he had decided to volunteer.[75] It would take some soldiers time to adapt to the new hierarchical customs, which were just as rigid but not yet internalized like the social hierarchies which governed them in their civilian lives. These training centres organized the new soldiers into battalions and other units, and the training usually lasted a few months.[76] Once there, many of the men found themselves conflicted: Along with the excitement that was present in many soldiers' early letters home, one can detect a fair bit of disappointment as well at the state of affairs upon their arrival. Arthur George Heath, who was teaching at Oxford before volunteering, wrote to his friend wryly of what he witnessed at the training camp when he as a freshly commissioned officer joined his regiment for the first time:

> This is a marsh by the Thames, intersected by canals, protected by a dyke that blocks the view of the river (though not of the sails on it), and covering a bog. No respectable cow would graze in such a place … You'd probably like to hear about the men. Well, they're not the 'flower of English manhood ' or, if they are, I pity the weeds.[77]

It is not explicit what most men were expecting from the war prior to enlisting, but the many remarks Heath makes toward the disorganized nature of the camps and the other recruits indicates that he, like many others like him, had held some preconceived and maybe even idealistic notions about the army. Some sense of what the men were expecting can be deduced from their complaints, which ranged from the quality of the food served to a confusion about the lack of equipment. It is widely recognized that the

[74] Wohl 1979, 91.
[75] Gibbs 1920, 5.
[76] In the British army by the end of 1915, recruits received between twelve and fourteen weeks' training before being sent to France. See Simkins 2007, 313.
[77] Heath 1917, 39–40. The friend and colleague he was writing to, Professor Gilbert Murray, would later go on to compile his war letters to a memoir after Heath perished in the war.

British army had not been prepared for the number of men who ended up volunteering, leading to many issues of logistics and supplies.[78] This unsurprisingly disgruntled some of the middle-class men coming from a world of plenty, of whom many were away from their familiar surroundings and comforts for the first time in their lives. The initially reluctant volunteer Gibbs, for example, was very cross with the situation initially, as is evident of his recollection of his first breakfast at the training camp:

> We lined up before the door of a gun shed, hundreds of us, shivering, filing slowly in one by one and having a chunk of bread, a mug of tea and a tin of sardines slammed into our hands, the sardines having to be divided among four. The only man in my four who possessed a jack-knife to open the tin had cleaned his pipe with it, scraped the mud off his boots, cleaned out his nails and cut up plug tobacco. Handy things, jack-knives. He proceeded to hack open the tin and scoop out sardines. It was only my first morning and my stomach wasn't strong in those days. I disappeared into the mist, alone with my dry bread and tea. Hunger has taught me much since then.[79]

The training of the British army during the Great War has been a widely contested topic, with many criticizing its inadequacy in the first years of war – though a rising number of historians have begun to emphasize the tactical developments from 1916 onwards.[80] However, not even in the later years after the training camp system had been reformed did the troops receive preparation on the camps that was representative of the real conditions in the trenches.[81] Trying to replicate the conditions on the front would arguably not have even served the main function of the training camps, and at worst could have been detrimental towards their primary aim: To turn civilians into functioning soldiers at the most efficient pace possible. Despite of the outer appearances of the camps, they were not so much focused on teaching men to handle weapons and to make them as physically fit for war as possible; rather they were designed to disengage them from their civilian identities by all available means, and to start building their identities as soldiers.[82] The army's objective was not to completely erase their backgrounds, but to repurpose them to fit the military hierarchy and to inculcate the men into a world separate from the one they had left behind, where new customs dictated every aspect of their daily lives and where ethics followed different rules to those that applied at home. The most tangible reminder the soldiers received of their new identity were the serial numbers which, As the future sapper Alfred Henderson recalled, were 'never to be forgotten,' and were 'in fact, more

[78] Simkins 2007, 194.
[79] Gibbs 1920, 7–8.
[80] Griffith 1996; Cecil & Liddle 2003; Rawling 2014; Prior & Wilson 1992.
[81] Simkins 2007, 314.
[82] ibid., 191.

important than one's name.'[83] With measures like these, the army had begun stripping the soldiers of their individuality in favour of their group.

In enforcing the building of a uniform soldier identity in recruits, the most emphasized strategy for militaries is that of the assertion of the military hierarchical structures. All new soldiers in Kitchener's Army had to adjust to the martial discipline as part of their basic training. For some, letting go of their civilian privileges was a bitter pill to swallow – a fact which was especially true for some of the middle-class recruits who had not been commissioned, and were instead drafted into the other ranks. At the same time, however, their background in the authoritarian public-school system and youth organizations had primed them well for the sort of discipline they were met with when they joined.[84] Thus, the unyielding expectation of proper conduct could easily command respect, but it could also breed animosity, which was then swiftly weeded out by the establishment via coming down hard on soldiers who made critical mistakes. John Nettleton, who had become a member of The Artist Rifles, a unit particularly popular with public-school and university recruits, recounted an instance where a man was punished severely simply for blowing his nose while standing at attention, which he accepted as having been just one of the instances of arbitrary but crucial military conduct they now had to adopt.[85] In an instance of similar 'breaking in' period, another officer trainee of 'The Artists' – Reginald Lester – wrote that he and his peers might have found themselves 'given two hours of extra evening drill' just for coming on parade 'with one button less bright than the rest.'[86] The reason for the necessity of following orders precisely and at all times was not yet apparent to them, but has always been a part of military training to condition the soldiers to follow orders without questioning the reasoning behind them.

It was relatively easy for public-school educated middle-class men to receive commission as the need for officers grew as rapidly as the number of volunteers increased, but even those recruits who had become officers themselves could find this degree of disciplinary dogmatism difficult to adapt to.[87] When Arthur G. Heath wrote home after spending a good deal of a week inspecting his platoon's 'feet and their boots and their rifles and their dinners and their invisible tooth brushes' that he found military discipline 'quite queer'

[83] IWM, PP/MCR/190: Alfred E. Henderson, 'Your Country Needs You: A Sapper's Story of Experiences in the Trenches of Flanders and Picardy during the Great War', unpublished account, 1978.
[84] MacMillan 2013, 261–262; Mangan 1987, 9–10.
[85] Nettleton 1979, 17.
[86] IWM P. 271: Lieutenant-Colonel R. M. Lester, 'The Years that Changed the World', unpublished account, c. 1970.
[87] Holmes 2004, 144.

and that he did not 'altogether jump to it.'[88] Meanwhile, subaltern Melhuish, while overseeing the early training of his men in Britain, wrote to his mother in Autumn 1914 about the sympathy he felt towards his men as it began to dawn to them that the war would likely not meet their ideas of it:

> Now that the first rush of excitement is over lots of these people are beginning to find that life is not all music, their sense of personal comfort is greater than their patriotism, they are anxious to get away. They are not allowed to do so unless medically or physically unfit for service. They become sulky and insubordinate, and then there is trouble … I only hope none of my men do anything worthy of death.[89]

The severity of the punishments was another reason for dismay of the fresh recruits, and often took them by surprise. Individual reactions to the army during this introductory phase ranged from outright hostility to deferential acceptance. In the end, however, those who made it through the training camps had adopted their second identity, motivated to go out there and fight the 'Hun' as members of the wider military organization. In the divisions formed out of Kitchener's volunteers, where no one received adequate preparation for what was to come, the other ranks ultimately shared the desire of their equally untrained officers and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) to equip themselves as quickly as possible for active service. This solidarity and the idealism which had not yet been tampered with by the realities of war motivated both sides, enabling most units to complete their basic training much sooner than expected, considering the many practical obstacles standing in their way.[90]

Once the soldiers had been shipped to the front, their attitudes towards the military organization diverged greatly between the officers and NCOs who they shared the battlefields with, and the higher ranks who were largely absent from the front. Those who served with them in the same unforgiving conditions were regarded very differently from the other military organization representatives, hence the officers and NCOs will be covered in the next chapter with the rest of those who soldiers considered their 'brothers in arms'. What comes to the more distant commanders, the interpretations of historians have fallen in somewhere between perceived resentment and adoration felt by the soldiers towards their high command. Like most other topics covered in this study, the sources provide proof for both sides of the argument, and the side historians have chosen is indicative of which tradition of Great War histories they follow; the traditional narrative or the revisionist school. The historians of the traditional British narrative which built

[88] Heath 1917, 42–3.
[89] IWM, PP/MCR/69: I. V. B. Melhuish to his mother, 12 Oct. 1914.
[90] Simkins 2007, 301.

upon figures such as Liddel Hart and A.J.P Taylor are often very unkind to Field Marshall Haig and other contemporary military commanders. These two were the pioneers of the traditional narrative of the Great War, and in their wake the sources have been interpreted so that the soldiers often seem quite cynical of their command. Such interpretations of the high command's professionality and the subsequent attitudes of the troops have since challenged by modern military historians such as Gary Sheffield and John Terraine, who both highlight the rationality with which the BEF was led considering the circumstances, and the loyalty which prevailed in the British troops during the war despite of the hardships they had to endure.[91]

The differences between letters and diaries versus memoirs as source material become particularly relevant when addressing this question: One can find much more criticism for the decisions of the high command in war memoirs written during the interwar and Cold War years – both periods during which pacifist views were prevalent. Furthermore, even if the negative retrospective attitudes weren't ideologically driven, they likely partially resulted from the fact that the way the soldiers interpreted their own experiences later was influenced and informed by the subsequent attempts made by some to make certain figures into the primary scapegoats of the horrors of the war. Michael Roper has pointed out that the post-war mood of bitter disaffection was pronounced among soldiers who were in their late teens and early twenties and unmarried during the war; those members of the so called 'war generation' who has known little or no adult existence other than as soldiers.[92] Historian Edgar Jones also believes that a part of the post-war attitudes of some veterans was due to the dissonance between expectations and ideals that had led them to the recruitment office, and the actual realities of wartime service.[93] As such, the letters and diaries that date back to the wartime are much more reliable accounts of contemporary soldiers' feelings towards their high command. What stands out from these sources is that any ranks higher than the officers' present on the front are scarcely mentioned. An explanation to this could be found in the wisdom of a career officer Feilding's remark after being asked on leave what the serving men thought of Haig; to which he replied that 'you might as well have asked the private soldier what he thinks of God. He knows about the same amount on each.'[94] Ironically, the attitudes towards the

[91] Hart 1935; Taylor 1974; Sheffield 2001; Terraine 1963.
[92] Roper 2011, 430.
[93] Jones 2006, 246.
[94] Feilding 1929, 314.

higher ups in the military often had worshipping features to them, such as when Bernard Martin, who had been one of the middle-class men enthusiastically joining the 'righteous war' at the age of seventeen recalled in his encounter with Haig after Somme that his opportunity to salute 'the C in C was the finale of a large experience.'[95] This is telling of the sense of trust most soldiers ultimately felt during the war towards the organization that sustained them and helped them endure the burdens of war.

The dilemma at the outbreak of the Great War from the military establishment perspective was how to transform recruits into 'sharp fighting machines' with the strength of character to overcome the carnage inflicted by the industrial arms.[96] At the time, the understanding of human psyche wasn't so developed, but the military system had had thousands of years to accumulate silent knowledge that helped create conditions where soldiers became more compliant to the strenuous tasks laid ahead of them than they would otherwise be. There are many implicit ways to make killing and enduring the threat of dying easier, and while some were left for the soldiers themselves to figure out, some received help from the military organization either knowingly or without. Whatever awareness of psychology the British army had during the war was often understood as distinctive aspects of morale, which is subsequently evident from the language used in both military training manuals, and in statements commenting on the endurance of men on the field. Staff officers were divided between those who had an optimistic outlook and believed that with right training the troops would reach the necessary high morale, and those who argued that the way to victory lied not in trusting the character of the soldiers, but rather in the development of more powerful weapons than the enemy.[97] Both camps nevertheless had to come together to create training suitable for the modern conditions of war, and the preparation of the British army during the Great War was divided into three areas of focus to produce the desired results: These areas were: (1) *cohesion training*, (2) *combat preparation*, and (3) *mental preparation*.[98] Their respective main purpose was to ensure unity of action, produce a predictable response, and to counter fear.

The purpose of *cohesion training* is to enforce the mechanisms of *obedience to authority* and *group absolution*. Known sometimes as *esprit de corps* in military context, this type

[95] '*Commander in Chief*'. See Martin 1987, 95–6. He would much later in his memoirs denounce his idealistic younger self by saying that he found it 'hard now to believe I could have been so stupid. See Martin 1987, 3-5.
[96] Jones 2006, 232.
[97] ibid.
[98] Kellett 1990, 216–19.

of cohesion is meant to inspire enthusiasm, devotion, and strong regard for the honor of the group, and it is still the focus of nearly all modern militaries.[99] Upon joining the army, the moral perquisite was that each man would followingly put all individual priorities, even survival instinct, second to the goals of the military organization. To normalize such behavior within the organization, the British army endeavored to socialize men into a specific soldierly culture of obedience and group loyalty. In such an environment, dissension became unpalatable: troops were tirelessly drilled to habituate them to obey orders without delay and to make them adjust to their new soldier identity.[100] Those who did not conform were punished both with official punitive measures as per the vertical structure of the military hierarchy, but also socially in the horizontal sphere inhabited by their fellow troops: The knowledge that each one of them was in the same boat ensured that they would be vigilant of one another, lest they risk their own survival in the line. At the same time, conduct that reached even the minimum levels of compliance was rewarded by both the system with material and symbolic gestures, and by one's fellow soldiers through approval.[101] Sometimes cohesion would not hold under severe conditions in the frontlines, but often what would happen was that when they were forced to face extreme circumstances, the experience strengthened the troops defensive motivations for joining the army in the first place, which resulted in an even deeper identification with the system.[102] This was the best case scenario to come out of cohesion training from the military organization perspective, as the deeper the identification felt with the system was, the likelier too was that they would not break from the strategies which, from the high command point of view, governed the overall course of the war.

Combat preparation aimed to familiarize soldiers with both the tools of their trade, and the conditions which they were going to be faced with in actual combat. The objective of this training was to familiarize the troops with military conduct to the extent that their actions would become automated. Ceaseless drilling was employed to make sure that soldiers would be able to carry through their tasks without actively having to think of *what* they were doing. This type of training aimed to inhibit the cognitive processes that may become detrimental to the completion of missions through the need for active defense and coping mechanisms.[103] Modern military psychologists still enforce these

[99] Kellett 1990, 217.
[100] Watson 2008, 57.
[101] ibid.
[102] ibid.
[103] Kellett 1990, 217.

types of 'ritualized' drilling practices to enhance combat performance.[104] Combat preparation focused on affecting the behavior of soldiers through conditioning their responses through repetitive training, which was then enforced with both punitive and rewarding measures. Like all military training, combat preparation also relied highly on enabling soldiers to outsource their ethics and decision making through *obedience to authority*. Out of all three training focus areas, combat preparation transformed the most over the course of the war, continually adapting to the changing circumstances on the front: For instance, extreme 'realism training' which was tested at the beginning stages of war, was quickly abandoned after it was found to cause trauma in and of itself rather than preventing it.[105] Meanwhile bayonet training, which was heavily enforced in the British military before and in the beginning of the war, retained its position as a focal point in combat preparation training throughout the war despite of how rarely soldiers on the front ended up using the weapon for its intended purpose. Bayonet training also works as an example of training which on the outside may have seemed cut and dry combat preparation training, yet had a more profound motive for existing in how it was thought to prime the soldiers spirit for the tasks that lay ahead.

The *mental preparation* given to soldiers prior to being sent to combat aimed to provide them with as much information as possible to keep them functional in the moment's confusion also known as the 'fog of war', while simultaneously withholding from them any contradictory information that might jeopardize their *rationalization and acceptance* process that enables them to take part in their primary duty.[106] This training is focused on enforcing morale through affirmations of the righteousness of the army's cause: Some of the strategies include persuading the soldiers through organizationally enforcing the process of *enmification,* or appealing to their *religious feelings*. Despite of how rudimentary the understanding of psychology before the Great War may seem when viewed through current standards, the military establishment was already concerning itself with optimizing the soldiers' mental state for the conditions of war when it broke out. This focus area gained even more attention as the war went on and it became apparent how large the threat of psychiatric casualties was. Until the Vietnam War, late onset combat stress reactions were hardly mentioned, but each such casualty not only deprived the battlefield of an otherwise functional soldier, but the cost of traumatized veterans on

[104] Driskell & Salas 1991, 185.
[105] Bourke 2000, 85–6.
[106] Kellett 1990, 118.

society would continue to be considerable even after the war had ended.[107] The increase in firepower and the expectation of heavy casualties in attacking troops led to staff officers emphasizing the need for an offensive mentality. This resulted in training which best ensured the willingness of soldiers to throw their lives away for their cause were given a pre-eminent role in what was called the 'psychological battlefield'.[108]

Not all training practices worked as intended, or at least they have since garnered a lot of heat. The bayonet emphasis within the British military training has been analyzed so much by the Great War historians that it has become a cliché, but it is one of the prime samples of how the Great War worked as a divider between the old world and the new. For the British army, the bayonet was first and foremost a symbol of their military ideals. A majority of the British high command agreed on the necessity of inciting aggression for the enemy in the troops, and hence the bayonet training was enforced not so much for its utility, but to 'arouse the pugnacity of the men.'[109] The capacity to fight at close quarters was also used as a propaganda measure of the excellence and courage of the British troops in comparison to their German counterparts. By the Great War, however, edged-weapon combat had almost disappeared, and John Keegan notes that in the Battle of the Somme 'edged-weapon wounds were a fraction of one per cent of all wounds inflicted.'[110] Overall, bayonets and other edged close-combat weapons accounted only half a percent of wounds in the German and British armies, to which the high command did on occasion admit that however strong the logic for the spirit of the bayonet, it was no easy matter to convert its theory into practice on the battlefield. C.P. Blacker, who served as an infantry officer and was later awarded the Military Cross, remarked that while it was 'splendid that our forceful corps commander should tell us that the real business of war was done with the bayonet … [bayonets] would not stop autumn rains or dry up the waterlogged crater-fields.'[111] Tim Travers, who has studied British military history extensively, has argued that the fixation on bayonets reflected the reluctance of the army to adapt to new conditions, which in turn 'lay the anxiety of a profession whose political and social standing was threatened by the obsolescence of those qualities that had served to gain respect and justification in the past.'[112] If modern war was defined more

[107] Noy 1991, 509; In 1922, some fifty thousand men had been awarded war pensions on mental grounds alone. See Winter 1979, 130.
[108] Jones 2006, 232.
[109] ibid., 232–3.
[110] Keegan 1978, 269.
[111] Blacker 2000, 174.
[112] Travers 1979, 286.

by firepower than the soldiers' 'character', then the military organization as it had existed until then had become obsolete.

By contrast, where the British army training absolutely succeeded was in the adaptation and implementation of Britain's civilian social structures within the military hierarchy. Gary Sheffield has argued that the way the paternalism-deference exchange, which regulated pre-war class interaction, was transferred to the officer-man relationship in the army created strongly cohesive inter-rank relations.[113] Deference was one of the principal bonds of the contemporary British society: It was both a pragmatic response of working-class men to economic realities, and a 'natural' way of life for both sides through cultural internalization by the way of religion and education. Deference was not a relationship of subservience, but viewed as 'the natural exchange' for paternalism, which meant that officers who did not look after their men forfeited their commissioned status in the eyes of the men.[114] The middle-class officers were acutely aware of this, and Donald Hankey stated that 'the average officer sets a high standard both for his men and for himself' and that 'he seldom fails to secure their loyal co-operation in attaining to it'.[115] Most historians are in broad agreement that this adaptation of wider social structures into the army in 1914–18 provided a bedrock of social cohesion which prevented the BEF from collapse.[116] Alexander Watson's assessment is that the acceptance of the army's authority as legitimate had roots in the soldiers' attachment to their civilian roles and loyalties in the Great War.[117] The decision to uphold the British tradition of the gentleman officer even as the number of officers was too few and their training into the role often took months to accomplish was not borne simply out of elitist sensibilities of who was a natural fit for the job; instead upper and middle-class officers were preferred *precisely* because their background and education provided them with the crucial leadership skills. Gary Sheffield has stated that 'chivalric influences ingested via the public school, pulpit and sports-field' left the young middle-class men with little doubt of the standards expected of officers in command of men who were put in a position to potentially sacrifice their lives for their country.[118]

[113] Sheffield 2000, 72–3.
[114] Cecil & Liddle 2003, 418–9.
[115] Hankey 1917, 84.
[116] Simkins 1991, 301.
[117] Watson 2008, 62.
[118] Sheffield 2000, 43–53.

Eventually, when the death toll of the war forced the British army to alter some of its practices, it still did not completely let go of the ideal of the gentleman officer. The army awarded more than two hundred thousand new commissions during the conflict, and by the end of the war as much as thirty-nine percent of officers came from the lower middle and working classes.[119] The reason for this was purely pragmatic, as Britain had a limited amount of upper and middle-class recruits to offer for officer positions. However, over the course of the war they enriched their training to accommodate these officers and NCOs who lacked the civilian background upon which the institution was built on, adjusting it so that the lower-class officers could be fully imbued with the traditional values of paternalism and leadership.[120] The dedication for following this 'natural order of things' in the British military dates back centuries, and a regimental history written just forty years before the war had suggested that 'the soldier in the hour of need and danger will ever be more ready to follow the officer and gentleman whom education, position in life, and accident of birth point out to be his natural leader.'[121] Whether there is truth to this statement or not, the British army's hierarchical structures provided the Great War soldiers with solid rules of conduct which gave their lives in the trenches a rhythm and took away personal responsibility when executing their tasks of war. It shaped their war experience by providing them with ideological support and a larger entity within which they could contextualize their personal experiences. It also enabled the camaraderie of brothers in arms to flourish, which has been recounted by many veterans to have been their primary motivation and relief in the otherwise chaotic and devastating war, and will be the focus of the next chapter.

[119] Sheffield 2000, 30–2.
[120] Watson 2008, 122. The Officer Cadet Battalions that were established in February 1916 provided lower-class officers not only with military training, but also an introduction to the gentlemanly mores of the traditional officer class. The need for men showed in the drafting criteria of NCOs as well, and a man was once selected as a corporal simply because was hygienic enough and also because, being a former fish salesman, he had a powerful voice. See Cecil & Liddle 2003, 299.
[121] Hamilton Frederick quoted in Holmes 2004, 77.

2.2. The Brothers is Arms

T. H. Procter, as he was studying the morale of soldiers in 1920, observed that 'one did not love the army', but that it was possible to love the battalion or even the regiment and identify oneself with its purposes, consequently also feeling proud of its achievements and ashamed were it broken.[122] Further than that, the relationships the soldiers formed in their most basic units of *platoon* and *section* count among some of the strongest they ever formed, sometimes surpassing even their closest civilian relationships. 'Of my memories of life in the trenches, the one thing I cherish more than anything else is the comradeship that grew up between us,' said George Coppard while recounting his experiences in the war which he had joined underage as a sixteen year old private, 'living together under the open sky, night and day, fair weather or foul, witnessing death or injury, helping in matters of urgency, and above all, facing the enemy' created circumstances which formed the solid foundation on which their comradeship was built.'[123] Richard Holmes has stated that in the Great War, there was no single British army, but 'a collection of regiments, drawn together in loose association into brigades and divisions which had personalities of their own.'[124] A soldier's unit members became his family during the war, and his world was defined by the unit's culture: It set borders on his life on duty and out of it, dictated whether he got promotions or leaves, guided his interpersonal relationships, and determined the strictness of the discipline which ruled him.[125] More than any decisions made by the higher ups, a Great War soldier's war experience was determined by how he related to his unit members on the battlefield: Even without the numerous modern psychological studies that underline the importance of an individual's social context to their mental state and subsequent behavior, this is reflected in both how much of an emphasis soldiers put in their writings on the camaraderie (or the lack thereof) they experienced, and how integral group dynamics are to the field of military psychology to this day.

Sidney Rogerson, who was commissioned in 1914 and went on to write about the diversity of the emotional experience in the trenches after the war was over, observed that as 'terrifying and uncomfortable they often were, the war years will stand out in the

[122] Procter 1920, 26–50.
[123] Coppard, 1969, 172–3. Coppard managed to enlist by claiming to be nineteen years old, and his memoirs which he was encouraged to publish by the Imperial War Museum in 1969 inspired many others to begin publishing their war memories in the following years.
[124] Holmes 2004, 75.
[125] The differences between separate units is well-exemplified by a single battery of artillery which shot two of its soldiers for striking a superior, compared to whole regiments which only ever shot enemies. See Holmes 2004, 75.

memory of vast numbers who fought as the happiest period of their lives' as he and his comrades were 'privileged to see in each other that inner, ennobled self which in the grim, commercial struggle of peacetime is all too frequently atrophied for lack of opportunity.'[126] His observation speaks of the contemporary British context and the restrictions of the society which fostered these men: In the war, they could finally form relationships which were built on the 'true' nature of their character, rather than the projection of it through attained social status. As social creatures, humans identify themselves through the groups in which they belong to, and we have consequently developed many psychological mechanisms around enforcing primary group creation and cohesion. The ethnologist Konrad Lorenz has said that a 'man is not a killer, but the group is' – and as will be seen in following chapters, the effect of his group was integral to how a soldier reacted in combat situations.[127] In a group, humans begin to act as a crowd, and the crowd has an intensifying effect: If aggression exists, it will become more so; if joy exists, it will become intensified by the crowd.[128] As such, the effect of the crowd seems to be much like a mirror, reflecting each individual's behavior in those around him and thus intensifying the existing pattern of behavior.[129] The internalization of a group's ideology and motives occurs when a norm's 'maintenance has become independent of its external outcomes, and the behaviors that are dictated by social norms become the ends that individuals desire in and of itself, and there is no discrepancy between the interests of the individual and those of the group.'[130] As was previously seen, the British military organization was geared towards producing this exact result.

However, the importance of social context began before the men had even joined the military. The middle-class volunteers of Kitchener's army had been as tightly knitted in their surrounding culture as they were in the war before they had even stepped a foot in a recruitment centre. The social context from whence they came from had provided them with values to uphold and ideals to strive for much like their brothers in arms would later provide them with a motivation to carry on despite of how dire the circumstances were. However, while the trench environment would prove to be fairly straightforward what comes to social dynamics, the progress that had been occurring during the beginning of

[126] Rogerson 1933, xxv.
[127] Konrad Lorenz quoted in Grossman 1995, 151.
[128] Shalit 1988, 76.
[129] A mirror in front of an aggressor tends to increase his aggression - if he was disposed to be aggressive. However, if this individual were not so disposed, the effect of the mirror would be to further enhance his nonaggressive tendencies. See Shalit 1988, 76.
[130] Horne 2003, 336.

the twentieth century before 1914 was a double-edged sword for British middle-class men: While the outer trappings of life were improving and life was made easier and more pleasant to live, it was making the unique qualities of men obsolete. Less wars, heavy machinery, and working opportunities for women were all undermining the importance of a man's role in his community.[131] Feminism was on the rise in Britain before the war, and while campaigning for the rights of women, this ideological base also brought to question the traditionalist views about men as well. In 1905, a feminist writer Rosa Mayreder had articulated the conundrum of modern men's identities like so:

> Even the work of a man has been replaced by the machine. The machine worker is a mere executor of a particular movement, which could just as well be done by women and children … The 'strong fist' which under other conditions was crucial and formed the legal foundation of his dominion, has become entirely superfluous … The office, the workplace, the professional practice, the atelier—they are all coffins of masculinity.[132]

Man, as a *warrior*, was simply no longer needed in modern society, in which even manual labour often required little physical prowess, yet men were still required to adhere to an ideal they could no longer fulfill.[133] It is no wonder then, that when an opportunity finally arrived for men to prove their worth as *men*, as warriors on the battlefield, some greeted the Great War with zest. Sholto Douglas, for example, wrote later how the declaration of war and the mere mention of patriotism caused a 'quickening of the pulse' and that he 'had no hesitation about deciding as soon as war was declared' about what he was going to do.[134] He began as a commissioned infantry officer, but would later go on to join the Royal Flying Corps, a position which was statistically even more dangerous than the infantry, but also promised more glory to the survivors.

Social relations between individuals within homogenous groups draw heavily from the group's shared values. For the contemporary British middle-class men, the quality 'most valued of Victorian possessions' was the virtue of good *character*.[135] The concept of 'character' can be translated to mean an identity which successfully reflected the most significant of the middle-class values at the time, *masculinity* and *honour*.[136] Values held different meanings for the classes, and for the middle-class, these qualities were not regarded as a given, but something that had to be acquired and upheld.[137] The concept of

[131] Blom 2010, 243.
[132] Philipp Blom quoting Rosa Mayreder's words from *Critique of Femininity,* 1905. See Blom 2010, 243.
[133] Blom 2010, 243.
[134] Douglas 1963, 43.
[135] Welch 2000, 290.
[136] ibid., 289.
[137] Heathorn 2004; Levsen 2008, 149.

'character' is near interchangeable with the concept of 'masculinity', as both could be defined as a set of features complementary to each other; such as 'courage', 'self-sacrifice', and 'duty'.[138] The dominant ideal of masculinity, deriving from the militaristic atmosphere of the age, defined the man by soldierly qualities of mind and body.[139] Along with masculinity, middle-class character also relied on the concept of *honour*: When the former became increasingly difficult to manifest in modern society, honour, which was primarily witnessed through acts of masculine virtue, experienced a crisis as well. Sociologically speaking, honour served as a means of social integration; it established certain rules for behaviour within a social group and provided its members with means to solve their conflicts in a way that did not damage the community's inner harmony. Honour was inseparably linked to assertive practices; aggressive action was often required to maintain one's honour, even at the threat of a loss of life or limb.[140] Accordingly, honour culture was particularly pronounced in the inherently masculine military, since what would have been a more obvious place to look for honour, than the battlefield?[141]

Sociological research has placed a great emphasis on the importance of the 'primary groups' for armies' cohesion and combat efficiency, yet Great War historians diverge in how much of an emphasis they place on the camaraderie experienced by the men.[142] While the sources reveal that the soldiers' feelings towards their fellow men weren't always benevolent and that shirking duties – or sometimes even stealing – was a common menace, a part of the complaints could be read as being the soldiers' way of venting in their diaries or to their loved ones.[143] The incidents of animosity between unit members could even counter-intuitively be viewed as an indicator of the level of intimacy that these men shared. Despite easily appearing hostile to an outsider, their surface-level actions could have simply been the effects of stress manifesting in the mutual relationships between the troops and helping them all remain sane. Coppard described these intense and often turbulent relationships the men in his unit shared with one another:

[138] Welch 2000, 289.
[139] Levsen 2008, 164.
[140] Frevert 2011, 40–47.
[141] Macmillan 2013, 245–246.
[142] For sociological research, Shils & Janowitz 1948.
[143] Watson 2008, 66.

> We would often quarrel violently over nothing. We would rage over little things. Our life was dominated by small, immediate events. Bad weather and long working hours would provoke outbursts of grumbling. A sunny morning and the prospect of a holiday would make us exuberantly cheerful and some would declare that the army was not so bad after all.[144]

The lives of these middle-class men had turned upside down as they were stripped of their freedom and made to work long hours in extreme conditions; and not only that, but they were also asked to do all of this while having to partake in some of the most traumatic duties of war. It is little wonder then that their emotions would manifest in exaggerated forms whenever allowed, for as long as they had not become numbed and desensitizied by their prolonged experiences on the front.

Most men were acutely aware of the shared ethos which propelled the troops, and what reservoirs of mental fortitude their units could be.[145] The group helped each member carry the guilt of killing, allowed them to air out their frustration and gallows humour which eased the unspoken shared fear and co-dependence, and reassured them of their role by everyone conforming to the same 'lunacy' that they themselves had chosen to partake in. Richard Williams, who wrote many letters during the war to his family before he was killed in action in 1917, confided in them that 'it is only the spirit of brotherliness and mutual helpfulness' that made 'the thing bearable.'[146] Psychologist S. J. Rachman has argued for the inhibitive effect on fear of social relations on the battlefield, stating that the presence of another person increases the perceived possibility of control over the situation.[147] In the same vein Charles Bird, a contemporary American psychologist studying British troops at the time, observed that men 'seek the protection of comrades by sinking their personality into the fighting unit' at times of danger.[148] Within the trenches, however, there existed two markedly different types of relationships with separate functions: The relationships between members of two distinct levels of the hierarchy, and the relationships between peers.

While still on the training camp, an officer of the BEF was a man strictly apart from his men and never seen without both sides adhering to proper military conduct.[149] In the

[144] Coppard 1969, 97.
[145] Watson 2008, 66–7.
[146] IWM, 82/26/1: A.R. Williams, letter to family, 24 Dec. 1915.
[147] Rachman 1990, 60.
[148] Bird 1917, 332.
[149] He would always address his soldiers with a sergeant in attendance with him, using formal speech while the men stood at attention, and keep a sergeant in attendance with him.

frontline, however, things changed as the outer trappings of military hierarchy gave way for survival tactics, and a competent officer was turned into an involved leader, constantly checking on his men and their munitions. Theodore Hardy, already a seasoned padre by the time the war broke out, observed from his observational post as a military chaplain that 'the line is the key to the whole thing. Work in the front line and they will listen to you. If you stay back, you are wasting your time. Men will forgive anything but lack of courage and devotion.'[150] On the battlefield, officers provided a sense of order, empowerment, and safety – three things desperately sought out in situations where soldiers felt they were losing control or questioned the things they were partaking in.[151] A strong officer could erase doubts from the minds of his soldiers to the extent that they would be less likely to question the decisions made by their unit later out of sheer respect. Meanwhile, officers devoid of military skill were distrusted by their subordinates.[152] Similarly, Rachman has found that effective, calm leaders make 'important contributions' to the control of fear – the primary emotion associated with the strain of war.[153]

Donald Hankey had come from a wealthy family and quickly rose to sergeant after joining Kitchener's army as a gentleman ranker – likely due to his interest in the working-class people. While he was still a Private, he described in his memoirs the utmost appreciation and respect he and his unit came to feel towards their captain as a result of him continuously exhibiting the virtues of humility, optimism, and patience in regard to his men:

> We began to take almost as much interest and pride in his progress as he did in ours. We were his men, and he was our leader. We felt that he was a credit to us, and we resolved to be a credit to him.[154]

Trust in one's commander is still recognized by military psychology as the most important factor of sense of security in a unit.[155] Officers would earn good relationships with their men through showing paternalistic affection in periods of inactivity in the trenches, and firm military excellence in times of battle.[156] Soldiers who knew that an officer cared for their wellbeing would also trust him not to throw their lives away needlessly in battle. As

[150] T.B. Hardy quoted in Winter 1979, 60. Hardy had originally been turned down upon volunteering for being too old, aged 51 in 1914. However, he was eventually admitted into the service in 1916 for the lack of men.
[151] A prime example of a strong cohesion like this is the Charlie company in the U.S. Army in the Vietnam War, which committed war atrocities in My Lai and of which most soldiers never even after tried in public felt like they had done anything objectively wrong, putting the virtue of following orders and watching out for one's fellow soldiers' back above regard for civilian lives.
[152] Watson 2008, 111.
[153] Rachman 1990, 59–63.
[154] Hankey 1917, 62. Hankey had likely joined the other ranks for his fascination of the working-class people, which he talked about in his memoirs on a few occasions.
[155] Noy 1991, 518.
[156] Watson 2008, 111.

the psychiatrist Edward Mapother observed when he studied the soldier responses in the Great War during the interwar years, 'neurosis was rarest in units whose officers showed real interest in securing for their men any possible comfort or mitigation of hardship and when out of the line knew how to insist on discipline and fitness without annoying men about eyewash.'[157] In the investigation into shell shock that was conducted after the war was over, the effect of good leadership found that the presence of 'good officers, especially as regards leadership and care of their men' is a key factor protecting soldiers from psychiatric disease.[158] According to psychiatrists Roy R. Grinker and John P. Spiegel, men had to be lavished with fatherly affection if they were to prove effective in combat.[159] The 'father' had to be competent, strong, and decisive so that his men would feel protected; he had to demonstrate good judgement and to be a 'just and impartial father', rewarding and punishing men accordingly.[160]

The officer too, drew strength from this responsibility and trust placed on him. A theme that runs through many wartime officers' letters, diaries, and memoirs is that of devotion for their men.[161] Officer Ian Campbell recalled that back in the billets he would hate his subordinate men with their stubborn moods and continually bad language, but that during difficult times they would 'show up splendidly.'[162] His note regarding the use of language is a reoccurring theme in many middle-class accounts, as they were forced to mingle with the working class. The prevalent tone in these mentions indicates that one's manner of speech was a conscious way to establish and enforce this separation. Arthur Gibbs even wrote down how his profanity habits transitioned as he worked his way up in the hierarchy:

> It's odd about that language habit. While in the ranks I never caught it, perhaps because I considered myself a bit above that sort of thing. It was so childish and unsatisfying. But since I have been an officer I think I could sometimes have almost challenged the sergeant-major![163]

For the historian as well, in the absence of details about their life, the language that the soldiers used in their letters and diaries is the most tangible indicator of their social background. Paul Fussel has studied the soldiers' letters and diaries from a literary perspective, and points out that not only were the soldiers' accounts rife with clichés made

[157] Mapother 1936, 863.
[158] RWOCIS 1922, 151.
[159] Grinker & Spiegel 1945, 39–40.
[160] ibid., 122–6.
[161] Cecil & Liddle 2003, 414.
[162] Ian Campbell quoted in Winter 1979, 61.
[163] Gibbs 1920, 19-20.

familiar to them through the literature they consumed as boys and as young men in their free time and in school, but that the way they approach the narrative writing of their own stories owes itself to what they deemed to be a palatable way to write about their experiences.[164] By being able to distinguish himself through rank, proper speech became less important for Gibbs.

The hierarchical attitude between ranks was seen as instrumental in establishing a functional relationship between the officers and their men within the military organization, yet many officers also believed that it was their duty to protect 'their' men against what many perceived as an impersonal and arbitrary war machine.[165] Some even refused to attack in unfavorable circumstances; such as one officer who invoked the 200 hundred men of his regiment who were presumably sick at the eve of the Battle of Loos.[166] Not everyone was happy about their place in the hierarchy either, with middle-class rankers having been slightly more inclined to complain about the officer-man relationship than their working-class counterparts.[167] They were not used to assuming the deferential position to men who in other circumstances they would have considered their peers.[168] This effect was highlighted in the instances where accomplished working-class men eventually rose to the rank of an officer, evident in how John Tucker, himself a public-school educated middle-class ranker, described the regard towards these men:

> It is curious that many of us suffered from the old-fashioned prejudice regarding officers who were not drawn from the upper echelon of society or without public school education, I remember one young subaltern, a former bank clerk with a slight cockney accent, who was looked down on by the lower ranks – a case of inverted snobbery?[169]

As previously shown, the British army made use of and was very complementary to the larger class system, with officers coming mostly from the middle class and above. At home, these young men had grown in relative privilege and freedom, but the army was a place for neither – even if they had acquired a commission. Becoming an officer without transitionary ranker period was quite easy for a person of a public-school background. However, some middle-class men however chose to draft in the other ranks instead either out of eagerness to see action, or self-doubt in their own leadership capabilities.[170] Arthur

[164] Fussell 2009, 199.
[165] Cecil & Liddle 2003, 416.
[166] Travers 2009, 21. History apparently 'does not tell' what consequences the officer faces after his insubordination.
[167] Cecil & Liddle 2003, 419.
[168] ibid., 419.
[169] Tucker 2015, 41.
[170] Ferguson 2003, 199.

Gibbs, who did eventually end up rising the hierarchical ladder once he found his confidence, recalled how he felt in the beginning of his service:

> As an officer I shouldn't have known what to do with the mob of which I was one. I should have been awkward, embarrassed. It didn't occur to me then that there were hundreds, thousands, who knew as little as we did about the Army, who were learning to be second lieutenants as we were learning to be troopers.[171]

The expectations placed upon officers were great, and like Gibbs, many were hesitant of taking up the task out of fear of losing their face, their decisions guided by their civilian identities' concerns about social status, which could be very easily marred if they failed their duties as an officer.

Homogenous groups through a common social background, age, and ethnicity have been found by military research to make for better unit cohesion.[172] Through sharing common values, the cohesion of a culturally homogenous group was heightened; so were consequently the effects of peer pressure and *group absolution*, which have been hypothesized to be the primary reason anything gets done in a battle situation. Among groups of men who have strong unit cohesion, there is a powerful process of peer pressure in which the individual would rather die than let his comrades down; both out of genuine attachment, and the fear of what others members of the group might think of him if he failed.[173] Unit cohesion has even been found by modern psychological research to predict combat effectiveness better than combat intensity.[174] Research on soldiers has also found that members of units with good unit cohesion were less likely than other soldiers to suffer breakdown, and good company morale also appeared to protect soldiers from mental collapse.[175] The organizationally enforced cohesion within the context of the middle-class volunteers of Kitchener's army relied heavily on the values which belonged in the social context of their civilian selves. The heightened willingness to volunteer among the middle-class also likely had its roots in the primary values of their shared culture, which thereafter translated well into the military context.

More than third of Kitchener's army battalions were so called 'Pal's battalions', raised by associations in towns and cities, whose inhabitants paid for their training, equipment, and uniforms.[176] Some of these battalions were composed of already established friends

[171] Gibbs 1920, 12.
[172] Manning 1991, 462.
[173] Grossman 1995, 150.
[174] Steiner & Neumann 1978, 866–8.
[175] Kellett 1990, 231.
[176] Winter & Prost 2005, 93.

committed to serving together, but not everyone was so lucky.[177] The ways in which the recruits without ready friends began trying to cope with their environment after leaving their home behind often involved attempting to find like-minded company; a feature which among the middle-class culminated in exchanging experiences within the public-school system. The military and the training camps were rigged to treat them not as individuals, but as cogwheels in the larger war machine, disposable and replaceable. As a reaction to this, conscious or not, the soldiers would find ways to remind themselves of their unique identity through forming intimate bonds with their comrades. Platoon and section fall within the natural perimeters of an intimate human group, and in these units, men were often going on first-name basis. [178] Of the small units of the army, John Priestley wrote that 'unless luck was running hard against you, one of them would be your sort, a man you could call a friend, often pure gold.'[179] He had been an aspiring writer when he volunteered in 1914, but would later in life only occasionally touch upon his war experiences, focusing especially on the camaraderie he had felt towards some of his brothers in arms in the trenches. Because this sort of bonding between the men enforces good unit cohesion, it has been and is still actively facilitated by armies through enforcing soldiers to bond with each other through recreational events outside of combat, and it is exactly the reason why frequent sanctioned alcohol related events, which were tolerated in the Great War, are still perpetuated by modern militaries.[180]

The way with which divisions built up distinctive identities displays the natural inclination that humans have towards forging group identities which foster primary group cohesion. These divisional identities embodied a concoction of differing qualities; regional bonding, a blend of regimental friendships and rivalries, a pride in past performance (real or imagined), and confidence (or disdain) in the divisional commander and his staff.[181] Though the largest units meant little to the soldiers as far as their social spheres were concerned, the old traditions which tied the institution together were regarded with awe. Hankey described the assimilation of regimental culture from the middle-class soldier's perspective like so:

[177] Or unlucky, taking into account how a single bombardment could wipe out most of the local population in such units.
[178] Soboroff, 2012.
[179] Priestley 1963, 56.
[180] Manning 1991, 463.
[181] Holmes 2004, 178.

> He has given up his personal freedom, which was not really of much use to him, and in return he has received what is infinitely more precious — his share of the common heritage of the regiment, its glorious past, its present prowess, its honour and good name, its high resolves.[182]

The middle-class men who were first to volunteer would have been well-educated into the historical significance of the British army institution, and through getting to taste some of the most traditional aspects of this institution, they were quick to adopt the values which it stood for and to attempt to integrate themselves within its ranks. One way in which this is visible is how quickly they took over the old military jargon, turning 'recruits' into 'Tug Wilsons', 'slips of paper' into 'chit', and 'rifles' into 'bundhooks'.[183] This kind of privileging of group over individual already had its roots in the British culture prior to the ignition of the war: The moral system was woven into the identities of the middle-class soldiers by the public schools involved a heavy emphasis on individual submission to group loyalty. The rhetoric which emphasized masculinity inevitably relied upon group identification, and this framework of attitudes about manliness and loyalty to higher institutions found its culmination in the war.[184]

'There is no life more intimate than that of the barrack-room,' recounted Donald Hankey after the war, and that 'there is no life where the essential characters of men are so fully revealed as the life of the trench.'[185] The intimacy of brothers in arms was manifested both physically and psychologically, of which the physical presence shared by the man was equally if not more important than the psychological bond. Lord Moran, who worked as a medical officer during the war and later became acclaimed for his acute observations of the soldiers' experience, observed during the war that 'physical contact is the one thing that helps' the soldiers against fear.[186] The Psychiatrist S.L.A. Marshall similarly encouraged men after the Second World War to provide each other with friendly physical contact, arguing that human warmth – or merely being able to see another man – was essential to offensives.[187] Proximity allowed the easing of tension through conversation, while shared songs indirectly expressed the soldiers' common and otherwise unspoken fears. It also guarded men from mental collapse, as men who were left 'too long in any lonely position or in a lonely nature of employment' were recalled by veterans later to have been particularly prone to mental collapse.[188] The reason for this might have been

[182] Hankey 1917, 278.
[183] Winter 1979, 52.
[184] Cole 2001, 475–6.
[185] Hankey 1917, 205.
[186] Lord Moran quoted in Winter 1979, 137.
[187] Marshall 1947.
[188] RWOCIS 1922, 15.

that they lacked the certainty and sense of control which the company of trusted comrades could provide.[189] This trust is considered essential to a soldier's effectiveness in battle by modern militaries: As long as the soldier can trust that his commander and unit are leading him to survival, he can feel secure in his dependency. But when this trust fails, the soldier becomes susceptible to anxiety and anger.[190] Marshall concluded in his post Second World War study that he holds 'it to be one of the simplest truths of war that the thing which enables an infantry soldier to keep going with his weapons is the near presence or the presumed presence of a comrade.'[191] The group allowed a sense of purpose upon days and years which seemed to otherwise be featureless and endless. In the end, collective personality became so pervasive that men on leave sometimes felt like deserters, would eat meals for dead comrades, internalize the values of dead comrades and become reticent about their private lives, so as not to weaken the bond.[192]

For any group to achieve a strong group identity, they need an *out-group* to their *in-group*.[193] In war, this is relatively easy to achieve and enforce through enforced *enmification*, which in the Great War had begun in Britain as an ideological message of military propaganda to lure men into joining a 'righteous cause'.[194] It was subsequently sustained by the battlefield environment through a cycle of exchanged hostilities.[195] Whether no man's land between opposing trenches was frequently fought over or if it remained mostly quiet depended highly on the location of the front and the culture of the units on both sides. Some battlefields were notoriously hostile, but in instances where the enemy was neither distant enough to be dehumanized nor brutal enough to be actively hated, troops on either side might fall into the pattern of live-and-let-live: a phenomenon coined and studied extensively by Tony Ashworth.[196] Psychologist Ben Shalit has assessed that 'the nearer or more similar the victim of aggression is, the more we can identify with him,' and the harder it is to kill him.[197] The truces which occurred on the Western Front during the Great War have acquired legendary proportions in popular culture, and they challenge the notion that humans are inherently warlike. However, most

[189] Watson 2008, 34–5.
[190] Noy 1991, 513.
[191] Marshall 1947.
[192] Winter 1979, 55–6.
[193] In-groups and out-groups are a well-established psychological concept; in-group representing a group an individually identidies as a member of, and out-group a group with which they do not identify.
[194] One of the most blatant forms of dehumanization used the Great War by the British was the use of language, through which the German soldier became a 'Hun' or a 'Boche'. See Sion 2016, 561.
[195] Stouffer et al 1949.
[196] Ashworth 1980, 24–47.
[197] Shalit 1955, 70.

truces which occurred were situational, like the ones described by John Beith in context of the mutual nightly supply duties of the section of the frontline he served in:

> We perform our nocturnal tasks, in front of and behind the firing trench, amid a perfect hail of star-shells and magnesium lights, topped up at times by a searchlight - all supplied by our obliging friend the Hun. We, on our part, do our best to return these graceful compliments. The curious and uncanny part of it all is that there is no firing … It would be child's play to shell the road behind the enemy's trenches, crowded as it must be with ration-waggons and water-carts, into a blood-stained wilderness. But so long as each side confines itself to purely defensive and recuperative work, there is little or no interference … After all, if you prevent your enemy from drawing his rations, his remedy is simple: he will prevent you from drawing yours. Then both parties will have to fight on empty stomachs, and neither of them, tactically, will be a penny the better.[198]

The rationale behind their actions was clearly the act of self-preservation, and both sides were willing to turn a blind eye to attack opportunities to make their battle environment as tolerable as it could be for however long they were required to stay there. The most famous battlefield truce of Christmas 1914 differed from these situational truces in that the war had not been going on for very long, and the military organization had not prepared for what might happen in inactive parts of the frontline where the trenches were often so close together that the troops could hear one another's daily activities clearly. Such proximity was toxic to dehumanization, and during the Christmas truce British and German soldiers in many sectors met peacefully, exchanged presents, took photographs and even played soccer. In some extreme cases, Richard Holmes even noted that 'the truce went on until well into the New Year, despite the High Command's insistence that it should be war as usual.'[199] Further along in the war, the opportunities for fraternization were attempted to be weeded out, so that the soldiers would be able to dehumanize their enemy without too much cognitive dissonance. John Adams later wrote about how during the next Christmas of 1915 the authorities now tried to stop them from repeating the 'entente of last Christmas', and how one of the officers in his battalion who had been present at one of the truces the previous year had a list of German signatures in his paybook to show for it.[200]

The relationship which the middle-class volunteers of Kitchener's army shared with their enemies on the Western Front drew heavily from the wider contemporary social context. Britain at the time was willfully and significantly isolated from the Continent, striving towards autonomy both in economic and military matters, while also treating foreign cultural influences with doubt or even disdain. G. J. Goschen, referring to Britain in a

[198] Hay 1916, 247–8.
[199] Richard Holmes quoted in Grossman 1995, 160.
[200] Adams 1917, 32.

1896 speech as the First Lord of the Admiralty, said that the country had 'stood alone in that which is called isolation—our splendid isolation…'[201] In saying this, he was not directly talking about the contentedness of then Victorian Britain about their status as the biggest, strongest, and most beautiful empire to have ever existed – yet he might as well have been.[202] Goschen's remark was contextualized in a discussion of the increasingly hostile international terrain which had developed as the world transitioned to the twentieth century. Despite of the long-enjoyed peace, other countries appeared more threatening than before as the new age rolled in.[203] This consensus which favoured suspicion likely also later factored into how the soldiers in the Great War eventually viewed members of other groups, whether they be friend or foe. Britain had not had alliances since the Crimean War, and the line was likely delivered as praise for the empire's ability to sustain this autonomous position.[204]

This isolation policy that had solidified during queen Victoria's reign did not exist only in the realm of geopolitics. Per Samuel Hynes, by the twentieth century, this attitude had saturated Britain's cerebral life as well; and even though Queen Victoria's successor king Edward was much more receptive to Europe, and especially fond of France, Britain had traditionally been quite reluctant to allow foreign influences into the country.[205] Even with the influence of their king Englishmen were suspicious of what it would do for the nation's morale to let influencers like Ibsen's plays and French impressionism in.[206] Britain had a sense of moral superiority about its own arts, and a commonly shared opinion about the suspect decadence of Continental entertainment.[207] Even though throughout king Edward's reign this quarantine on foreign influences was finally being lifted, it had left its impression on the population. [208] This culturally internalized distrust in their neighbours, when it was accompanied with the rumours of German atrocities in Belgium and elsewhere, made it possible for the British to dehumanize their German enemies. Robert Keable had been very keen on joining the war from the beginning but only got to do so in 1917 after two thwarted attempts before because of his ill health. He wrote down how the soldiers had thought at the beginning of the war that the Kaiser was

[201] Hynes 1975, 307.
[202] In fact, he was attempting to secure an increase of 11 percent to the naval budget, on the grounds of Britain still standing alone and without alliances in an increasingly hostile world. See Gough 2014, 231.
[203] MacMillan 2013, 41–43.
[204] Technically it was: In 1850 Britain was already producing half of the world's industrial goods. See Blom 2012, 24.
[205] Hynes 1975, 307; Macmillan 2013, 39–40.
[206] Hynes 1975, 307–309.
[207] ibid., 313–335.
[208] ibid., 313.

off his head and the Germans a race of slaves. He continued that the eventual contact with them on the battlefield had caused some confusion, when many of them realized they were not so different to themselves, and that the Kaiser – however mad – could not have been responsible for the calamity of the war all by himself. [209]

This isolation mentality is also significant in regards to the British army's internal cohesion. The reason for this lies in the number of possible experiences and ideas that the English middle-class people may have shared with one another – which in turn translated to better cohesion in the trenches. Less diversity leads to greater kinship through shared experiences and views, and thus it can be speculated that in this sense the English middle class stood on more solid ground than its corresponding groups on the Continent. Additionally, the isolation mentality catered generously to the sense of social identity, the existence of which relies on a person's sense of who they are based on group membership.[210] Though an out-group was necessary for a cohesive in-group to form, it is a consistent trend in military psychology that a soldier fights for his comrades rather than against his enemy. The British Expeditionary Force and the personal relationships it fostered between its troops were ultimately the backbone which was perceived by the surviving veterans to have been the force which motivated them to keep on going. As they went to war, they did it for their families – and in the war they fought for the men beside them. It allowed them to commit to the acts of war which they may have never taken part of in other circumstances, and the strongest regarded incentive for murderous aggression against the enemy has been cited to be the love for one's comrades against a foe identified as threatening that relationship.[211]

[209] Keable 1919, 81.
[210] Fearon 1999, 10–16.
[211] Noy 1991, 513.

3. The Strain of War

"Look at the infantryman's eyes and you can tell how much war he has seen."

- Bill Mauldin, a war correspondent of the Second World War.[212]

3.1. The Act of Killing

When describing the primary function of a soldier, a military padre in the Great War wrote that 'killing is his first duty, and he only tries to avoid being killed for the sake of being efficient.'[213] Wars are fought for victory, meaning that soldiers are inevitably treated as pawns on a board; expected to die when necessary, and to kill so that victory can be secured. In the context of the Great War, this sacrificial element was heightened as nations had not yet adapted to the realities of industrial warfare. However, the soldiers who were thrown into combat situations were still individuals with their own conscious and unconscious desires, which ensured that neither of these duties came easy to them. While it is easy to empathize with the soldiers' reluctance to die, the natural aversion humans have towards killing or even harming others is often far less obvious. However, the phenomenon of *predation death anxiety* – the distress and unconscious guilt that arises from an individual harming another – is acknowledged by modern psychology; its existence and effects have been well documented through numerous studies which suggest that violence, especially when taken to its extreme in the act of killing, has a heavy toll on the human mind.[214] When Kitchener's volunteers went to war, they left behind a world where murder was a taboo of the highest degree, and entered a realm where they had to accept that 'the crime most foul' was now to be their duty. Their subsequent reactions reveal that sometimes the most grueling aspect of the trenches was not the constant threat of death, but the demand for participation in the bloodshed.

This chapter deals with killing and not the general acts of aggression by the Great War soldiers because out of all violent acts, killing another human being has a special status both in all known human cultures around the world, and in the inner mechanisms of the human psyche.[215] The irreversible nature of killing has a heightened effect on the perpetrator's mind because it erases all possibility of making amends to one's victim in

[212] Quoted in Wheeler 2006, 3.
[213] Birmingham 1919, 64.
[214] See Maguen et al. 2010, 86–90; Maguen et al. 2009 435–443; Van Winkle & Safer. 2011, 107–10; Green et al. 1990, 729.
[215] While the majority of cultures regard killing of humans as taboo, even in cases where it is permitted (sacrificial traditions etc.) the act of killing has a special – and often a ritualistic – significance.

the future; its very essence invites existentialism, which can subsequently trigger even more remorse than one felt during the act itself. To kill, a decently socialized person must both subvert his internalized social norms, and bypass his personal sense of morality.[216] When in war, soldiers are removed from both the personal motives for the kill, as well as the emotional outbursts usually associated with incidences of civilians killing one another: As such, the burden of killing may weigh on the soldiers especially hard, for they are bereft of some of the natural defense mechanisms that guard a killer's psyche and allow them to commit their acts without emotionally shattering them. In the case of Kitchener's volunteers in the Great War, the soldiers were particularly vulnerable: Having entered the war as civilians with skewed expectations of what they were going to be faced with, they received only limited preparation of actual combat situations before being thrown into situations where they had to confront matters of life and death, perhaps for the first time in their lives.[217] Many of them had troubles approaching the concept of war seriously, rather seeming to treat is as an excursion, like Donald Hankey later recollected him and his peers doing upon drafting:

> Battle! Battle, murder, and sudden death! Maiming, slaughter, blood, extremities of fear and discomfort and pain! How incredibly remote all that seems! We don't believe in it really. It is just a great game we are learning ... Just a game, that's all, and then home to tea.[218]

Admittedly, Hankey did write these lines retrospectively in his memoirs, and it is much easier to mock one's intentions for dramatic effect after the fact. The excitement which was shared by many middle-class men however indicates that these aspects of the war had not been properly internalized before the soldiers had to confront them. Psychological survey research into the military has suggested that while patriotism and ideology may lure young men into joining and play a part in their soldier identity, they end up being far from their mind when the bullets begin to fly.[219]

Soldiers do nevertheless need to have some justification, however feeble, to rationalize to themselves their partaking in acts few of them would willingly do under other circumstances.[220] Dave Grossman, who has studied the effects killing on battlefields, has devised a five-stage model of killing in combat; the stages being *concern about the killing*,

[216] Grossman 1995, 209.
[217] Simkins 2007, 314.
[218] Hankey 1917, 20–1.
[219] Stouffer et al. 1949; Marshall 1947; Little 1964; Baynes 1967.
[220] Manning 1991, 457.

the actual kill, *exhilaration*, *remorse*, and *rationalization and acceptance*.[221] The first four stages all relate to the execution of the act itself and the most immediate reactions to it, while the last stage of *rationalization and acceptance* deals with the psychological mechanism which the combatant needs to succeed at in order to continue functioning as they are supposed to. In failing this final stage, they are rendered useless as soldiers either by hence refusing to kill altogether, or through suffering psychiatric consequences that hinder their performance at best, and utterly psychologically cripple them at worst.[222] While the fear of death is often emphasized by historians as the primary cause for psychological stress in war, it is challenged by the fact that history is full of soldiers who have committed suicides or mutilated themselves to avoid combat taking part in killing, the Great War being no exception to this phenomenon.[223] Though often glossed over, little talked about, or difficult to tell if the act had been intentional or not, the soldier suicides of the trenches were known to their brothers in arms: Siegfried Sassoon, an officer in the war and an acclaimed war poet, examined the topic in a more acceptable setting than conversation by writing it into a verse of one of his most somber poems:

> I knew a simple soldier boy / Who grinned at life in empty joy / Slept soundly through the lonesome dark / And whistled early with the lark. / In winter trenches, cowed and glum / With crumps and lice and lack of rum / He put a bullet through his brain. / No one spoke of him again.[224]

Grossman considers that the negligence of the average man's reluctance to kill even at the risk of death has unjustly been ignored by those researchers who attempt to understand the psychological and sociological pressures of the battlefield, and has stated that:

> Looking another human being in the eye, making an independent decision to kill him, and watching as he dies due to your action combine to form the single most basic, important, primal, and potentially traumatic occurrence of war. If we understand this, then we understand the magnitude of the horror of killing in combat.[225]

The perpetrator's point of view to killing is a subject matter that many historians have understandably skirted around, especially when the studied events are relatively recent or heavily politicized. In the case of the Great War, however, a few contemporary historians have taken the issue under examination. Niall Ferguson and Joanna Bourke have most notably left their mark on the discussion: Ferguson through suggesting that 'many men simply took pleasure in killing', while Bourke has gone as far as to conclude that that

[221] The stages were inspired by the Kübler-Ross model of five stages of grief, and do not suggest a linear progression of one emotion to another, instead different people may experience only some stages, or in another order from the default order of the model. Grossman 1995, 231; For the Kübler-Ross model, see Kübler-Ross & Kessler 2009.
[222] Grossman 1995, 238–40.
[223] Watson 2008, 39.
[224] Siegfried Sassoon's poem '*Suicide in the trenches'* quoted in Sassoon 2012, 64.
[225] Grossman 1995, 30–1.

'more men broke down in war because they were *not* allowed to kill than under the strain of killing.'[226] They come from two different historiographical schools – Ferguson's conservatism going against Bourke's constructionism, yet their views on this are somewhat adjacent to each other regarding this question. They present support for their arguments through citing letters and diaries of the Great War soldiers – not unlike the primary sources of this study – and analyzing contemporary casualty statistics from the war. Their assertions of soldiers' willingness to violence can be read as embellished attempts to return a part of the previously lost agency back to the Great War soldiers, a sentiment that is detectable also in Alexander Watson's study of British and German soldiers and their endurance in the Great War. Watson highlights the resilience and mental fortitude found in both armies and criticizes the mainstream portrayal of soldiers as helpless sufferers of events far too large for them to comprehend. He states how the 'confusing impression' given by many historians is that 'while societies and armies proved to be very resilient during the war, the individuals who comprised them were victims of their situation and susceptible to mental collapse.'[227] While Watson entertains the idea of combat pleasure, he does not however end up making the ultimate conclusion of soldiers possessing a natural bloodlust.

Having written extensively about the concept of fear, Bourke suggests that the highest rates of breakdown were recorded among support troops who were subject to the fear of killing without an opportunity to retaliate.[228] Edgar Jones has re-evaluated the same medical statistics used by Bourke and added in statements from medical officials who worked with psychiatric casualties during and after the Great War to prove that virtually all admissions to the shell-shock division were from units directly engaged in combat, the majority being infantrymen.[229] This is supported by studies into combat stress reactions, which have found them to be most prevalent in combat-engaging troops.[230] The fact that non-combatants (such as medics, recon troops, chaplains, and in some instances prisoners of war) seem to have been relatively safe from psychiatric disorders also brings the connotation to the protective element of killing to question.[231] Jones points out that the absence of these people in the lists of psychiatric casualties implies that the soldiers most

[226] Ferguson 2003, 358; Bourke 2000, 19.
[227] Watson 2008, 6.
[228] Bourke 2000, 249.
[229] Jones 2006, 239.
[230] Noy 1991, 511.
[231] Grossman 1995, 54–63.

susceptible to psychiatric damage were those not only directly under the threat of a likely death, but also those who were expected to kill as well in a context where they were not physically or mentally far-removed from the consequences of their actions.[232]

Meanwhile, Ferguson uses individual accounts and the Freudian concept of a *death drive* to support his conclusion that battle was an exciting and often pleasurable experience to the soldiers.[233] His arguments about the joys of war are, however, mostly constructed around the effects of various defense and coping mechanisms recognized by modern psychological research, and in some instances his assessment of the instances in which soldiers' morale was most susceptible to cracking are simply wrong. For example, soldiers in exposed positions were bound to eventually psychologically cave in regardless of their characteristic qualities, despite of him asserting that a certain type of *esprit de corps* guarded the men from breakdown.[234] However, even if Bourke's and Ferguson's conclusions are in part questionable, they correctly identified a 'battlefield high' which is also recognized in Grossman's model as the *euphoria* stage. Similarly the question still remains how out most of the troops who engaged in combat and killed their enemies persevered, if killing was so traumatic.[235]

While the psychological structure of the process of killing can be universally implemented to the Great War infantry, the contents of each stage varied depending on the values which were significant to the soldiers, and how the internalized social norms from their civilian lives had conditioned them to respond to certain cues.[236] The most significant unifying factors for the middle-class volunteers of Kitchener's army were their shared background of a public-school education, participation in pseudo-militaristic youth organizations and sports clubs, and the lack of any prior military field service experience.[237] These young men were often more well versed in classical literature than in the challenges and rewards of real life, and their social background had brought them up to believe in the sanctity of life as much as in the virtue of justice. Through reading Horace, they had learnt that it was sweet to die for one's country, and from Homer's

[232] Jones 2006, 240.
[233] *Death drive* meaning the urge towards death and self-destruction. See Ferguson 2003, 357–66.
[234] As was found out by Swank and Marchand when they studied US infantry in north-west Europe and found out that after 60 days of continuous combat, 98 percent of surviving soldiers were likely to have become psychiatric casualties regardless of *esprit de corps*. See Swank & Marchand. 1946, 236–47.
[235] By 1918 the British army had treated approximately 232,000 psychiatric disorders which had emerged on the battlefields, which is only a fraction of the five and a half million men who fought in the war. See Watson 2008, 43.
[236] A social norm is an informal understanding that governs the behaviour of members of a given society or group, entailing concepts such as values, customs, and traditions, as well as assumptions about other people's motivations. See Lapinski & Rimal 2005, 129.
[237] Sheffield 2000, 30–2.

writings they remembered that it was in battle that one's worth was demonstrated.[238] Therefore, their *rationalization and acceptance* stage of coming to terms with killing often involved finding justification for their surface-level immoral actions through an ulterior utilitarian motive of vanquishing evil.[239] On occasion, the soldiers would even outright make comparisons between their own conditions and those of the classical heroes, like John Adams once did as he looked upon the stars on a quiet night in the trenches:

> I shall read Homer in a new light after these times. I begin to understand the spirit of the Homeric heroes; it was all words, words, words before. Now I see. Billet life—where is that in the Iliad? In the tents, of course. And the eating and drinking, the ' word that puts heart into men,' the cool stolid facing of death, all those gruesome details of wounds and weapons, all is being enacted here every day exactly as in the Homeric age. Human nature has not altered … Under the stars and in a trench you were as good as any Homeric warrior; but you were little better. And so you felt you understood him.[240]

Adams had been an accomplished student of the Classics during his time in school, and on several occasions used his knowledge of them to make sense of his own experiences on the front. The volunteers were inspired by old war stories, the belligerent heroes in the literature they consumed, and by the patriotism ubiquitously present in contemporary middle-class youth associations.[241] Boys' magazines during the pre-war era celebrated public schools and the 'public school spirit', while also advocating sports and featuring articles which were meant to teach their readers the proper middle-class ethics of Britain at the time.[242] They were, too, trying to instill 'character' into the younger generations. These magazines were deliberate tools of value education; few of the most popular boys' magazines at the time, *The Boy's Own Paper, Young England, Chums* and *The Captain* all used the same writers, and expressed the middle-class ethics in a uniform manner throughout the magazines' pages.[243] For comparison, the masculine heroes for the adult men of the middle class included people such as the bodybuilder Eugen Sandow, and Sherlock Holmes, who even in all of his bohemian eccentricity was also an excellent boxer and a swordsman.

When the young men educated in this culture flocked to service, everyone had their own ideas of what the war was going to be, and what participating in it meant for them personally. Many were excited to go to war, but a part of the excitement was likely related

[238] Wohl 1979, 93.
[239] Stewart 1916, 199.
[240] Adams 1917, 121-2.
[241] Bourke 2000, 27.
[242] MacDonald 1989, 520.
[243] ibid.

to the age of many of the soldiers: Out in the world for the first time on their own, shouldering responsibilities which, during the less stressful times on the front, may not have been as soul-crushing as they were empowering.[244] The prospect of killing was a concept that these men had likely at most considered in power fantasies of imaginary duels, or of performing heroic acts in the war. During his initial training Arthur Gibbs, for example, already pictured himself 'picking up Boches on my lance like a row of pigs – a and I hadn't even handled a real lance as yet!'[245] The sort of killing on an industrial scale that they would get involved in in the Great War they could not even have imagined, let alone be prepared for. Private George Coppard recalls how his regard for trench warfare changed after the initial novelty had been overturned by cold reality:

> The first few months, trench warfare had been a kind of dangerous fun to me. Although only a boy I had lived with grown men, sharing their fears and dangers. It was still fun when not in the trenches. Up in the front line, however, anything approaching merriment was dead.'[246]

By the time they were on the front, they sometimes ended up using imagery of hunting or sports as they took part in the killing, as per the conventions and ideals of their middle-class upbringing.[247] Donald Hankey attested to this by stating that from his earliest schooldays, the public-school man had been taught that the mark of a gentleman was to welcome danger and that war was 'a glorified form of big-game hunting – the highest form of sport.'[248] By attending to the psychological need to make sense of what was happening around them through such comparisons, they put psychological distance between themselves and the crushing reality, thus making it easier for themselves to 'play their part' in the war. Humour as a coping mechanism had a particularly significant effect in this process of acknowledgement of the kills. For instance, an Oxford graduate Captain Harry Yoxall once wrote about how one of his own machine gunners tended to play tunes with his gun, and recounts an incident when 'he fired a burst of fire with the *Pom-tiddly-om-po*m cadence to which the Fritz replied with a *Pom-pom*, and hit two men of ours who were on a working party.'[249] The reality of the situation was likened to a 'game' ladened with dark humour by Yoxall, which made the fact that men under his command were dropping like flies for no particular aim easier to bear.

[244] Jones 2006, 243.
[245] Gibbs 1920, 13.
[246] Coppard 1969, 62.
[247] Ferguson 2003, 202.
[248] Hankey 1917, 91.
[249] IWM, P 317 Con Shelf: H.W. Yoxall, letter to family, 10 June 1916. He finished his recollection of the incident by simply remarking that 'the game goes on.'

As military expert Bruce Newsome has demonstrated, the motivation to join the armed forces was different from the motivation needed to sustain a man through combat.[250] Sometimes the men went through experiences in the line that incited individual motivation for the killing without the need of outside encouragement, such as when a close friend or a relative had recently died in the hands of the enemy. Wilfred Bion, who served in the Tank Corps as an officer and would later pioneer as a psychoanalyst in the treating mental disorders, described an event of having to subdue a tank driver who had begun to unrestrainedly shoot at a group of German prisoners while screaming that they had killed his brother.[251] Without intrinsic motivation such as this, however, it is difficult to convince people to kill. Lieutenant George Roupell, who had trained in the Royal Military College and commissioned in the army just two years before the outbreak of the Great War, had major problems with this as he was commanding the Kitchener's volunteers. He stated that the only way he could stop his men from firing into the air was to draw his sword and walk down the trench, 'beating the men on the backside and, as I got their attention, telling them to fire low.'[252] To get people to take the step from *concern about the killing* to the *actual kill*, the frontline was structured in such ways that created leverage over the troops' individual desires to remain passive. Throughout their basic training, the Kitchener's volunteers had been inculcated into a distinct martial culture, which through the erasing of their civilian identities made them susceptible to the psychological mechanisms that rely on the group's hierarchical structures and shared ideology rather than on individuals' feelings and morality.[253] This continued as they were transferred to the front, and the *demands of authority* and *group absolution* both worked as a trigger to start the process of killing, but also helped the soldiers *to rationalize and accept* their deeds after they had been committed.

During the months of basic training, the Kitchener's volunteers had gone through rites of initiation to the army, which involved adopting a soldier's identity alongside their already existing civilian selves, with new codes of conduct and social norms that dictated what were the appropriate ways to behave.[254] When eventually taken to the Western Front, they were even further removed from their original environment, and the military organization's emphasis on maintaining cohesion ensured that the feedback to the soldiers

[250] Newsome 2003, 24–6.
[251] Bion 1982, 137.
[252] IWM, DOCS: Roupell George, typescript account, 3–4.
[253] Watson 2008, 57.
[254] ibid.

was continuously enforcing behavior which was deemed favorable towards the war aims. The demands of authority on the front were ever-present, and through repeatedly conforming to the established system, the soldiers primed themselves to accept the military hierarchy as an unquestionable authority figure in the future as well. The authority of the military was enforced at every turn either explicitly or insidiously: Such as when in attempting to appeal to the soldiers' religious feeling, the soldiers were even told to put their lives into 'God's keeping' so that they could 'shelve all responsibility and go forward with a quiet mind in the knowledge that God is at the helm and that nothing can happen without his sanction.'[255]

The routine of the front lines helped to *desensitize* the soldiers of the values that had defined their identities as civilians. Moral desensitization also occurred upon arriving at the front through the shock and confusion of moving from one end of the ethical scale to another, which could then leave the individual detached from the moral structures they built upon themselves in their civilian life.[256]Arthur G. Heath reminisced in a letter to his female friend of how grim it was to read as a censor the affectionate letters from his company's snipers in which they – amidst lots of home gossip – prided themselves in getting on well at their 'job'. He writes how he could often hear them compete with one another about whose count was the highest, and that the reality was that it was 'murder in cold blood' in which they were competing in.[257] In war, the extremes on the scale of ethics can come so quickly that moral injury results in the confusion it creates, leaving the individual detached from the moral structures they built upon themselves in their civilian life. Soldiers in the Great War were primed to obey orders without question, and when they were made to take part in 'going over the top', a speedy advance was encouraged as it provided the chance of capturing or killing enemy garrisons before they were able to climb out of their shelter or operate their weapons.[258] This sometimes led to the killing of surrendering enemy troops, to which Guy Chapman, who had been educated a lawyer in Oxford, once simply remarked that 'if you start a man killing, you can't turn him off again like an engine.'[259] In the Great War context, the obedience to authority worked as a shield for both the psyches of the commanding officers and the troops who

[255] Reverend M.S. Evers, letter to sister, no date, reproduced in Liddle 1979, 61.
[256] Moral sense is the structure and methods with which a person distinguishes between right and wrong, consequently making decisions to act and character judgements based on it.
[257] Heath 1917, 136.
[258] Keegan 1978, 284.
[259] Guy Chapman quoted in Keegan 1978, 48.

carried out their orders. While the troops could *rationalize* for themselves that they were only obeying orders, the weight of decisions was somewhat removed from the officers' shoulders by the act being carried out by others creating physical and psychological *distance* between their decisions and the consequences of those decisions. Heath himself wrote that he thought the war was essentially for the phlegmatic and callous, and that he should be much happier if he didn't mind the sight of a man with his head blown clean off, indicating that as an officer he could not fully remove himself from the deeds and experience of his men.[260]

Another source of social pressure in the trenches came from the other combatants. If an individual is bonded with his comrades, and if he is with 'his' group, then the probability that he will participate in killing is significantly increased through the process of *group absolution.*[261] In the absence of these factors, the probability that the individual will be an active participant in combat is quite low.[262] *Group absolution* makes the group member's accountability to the group more prominent, and if a soldier feels he would be letting his friends down by not participating in the shared process of killing, the act becomes easier to see through.[263] Shalit's study about psychiatric casualties on battlefields have found that once troops have seen combat, their first concern changes from a self-preserving fear of death and injury to the fear of not being able to meet the obligations of combat – thus letting their fellow soldiers down.[264] This can be partly seen in the fact that crew served weapons, such as machine guns, consistently account to much more kills than rifles.[265] For the volunteers of Kitchener's army, it does seem that they regularly formed very intense bonds with their group: If the primary reason for joining the war for middle-class men had been to protect their homeland and loved ones, in war they found their motivation in the immediate relationships they had with their fellow soldiers. The effect of the group was not always corruptive, however, or at least the soldiers themselves preferred to latch onto the good qualities of their fellow men while overlooking the faults. In Donald Hankey's opinion, the actual experience of the war brought out the best qualities of men; their pluck, their indomitable spirits, their humour,

[260] Heath 1917, 125.
[261] Grossman 1995, 150–1.
[262] ibid.
[263] Bennett 2016, 735–6.
[264] Shalit 1988, 11.
[265] In the Second World War, for example, nearly 100 percent of crew-served weapons (such as machine guns) fired while only 15 to 20 percent of the riflemen fired. See Grossman 1995, 153.

and their readiness to shoulder a weaker brother's burden in addition to their own.[266] Similarly, the wartime poet and writer Richard Aldington emphasized in his partially autobiographical novel that the mutual care men had for each other had a civilizing effect:

> They had every excuse for turning into brutes, and they hadn't done it … They had saved something from a gigantic wreck, and what they had saved was immensely important-manhood and comradeship, their essential integrity as men, their essential brotherhood as men.[267]

How the soldiers of the Great War reacted to killing depended on several factors, but the easiest way to begin assessing its psychological effects is to locate the battle positions and situations where most killings occurred. Fifty-nine percent of casualties were a result of artillery, and three times as many men were killed by shells as by bullets.[268] Meanwhile, face-to-face killing with bayonets and sharpened tools accounted only for half a percent of wounds in the German and British armies, and grenades caused less than three percent of wounds.[269] Out of the combatant troops, those who were furthest from the front, such as artillery men, were the least likely to receive admissions to psychiatric care.[270] According to Grossman, being too far removed from the effects of their work to witness it in any direct way resulted in lowered chances of them becoming psychiatric casualties.[271] In the Great War, most of the soldiers' time was spent out of battle, and when the battle was on, killing often occurred from a distance. John Adams reflected upon the instrumentality of the killing which focused on the 'drawing of the bow' instead of the 'landing of the arrow' after witnessing a particularly traumatic sight of a fellow officer blown to pieces:

> No man could keep on killing, if he could see the men he killed. Who had fired that howitzer shell? He would never see his handiwork, never know what he had done today. He would never see; that was the point. Had he known, he would have rejoiced that there was one Englishman less in the world. It was not his fault. We were just the same. What of last night's bombardment? Had we not watched with glittering eyes the magnificent shooting of our own gunners?[272]

This development owed itself to the evolution of industrial arms: Denis Winter for once has assessed that just six machine-guns could hold up a brigade, and the general reality of modern weapons made it so that opposing rarely came close to one another.[273] Spenser Wilkinson, who was at the time renowned for his analysis of military strategies, stated in

[266] Hankey 1917, 33–4.
[267] Aldington 1930, 295.
[268] Sheffield 2001, 111.
[269] Watson 2008, 32.
[270] The artillery men are underrepresented in the psychiatric casualty statistics and comparatively, outside the infantry troops, bomber pilots and members of the Navy have also suffered notoriously few psychiatric casualties in relation to infantry, likely largely due to the levels of distance they're always able to maintain between themselves and the enemy. See Grossman 1995, 58–60.
[271] Grossman 1995, 55–60.
[272] Adams 1917, 264–5.
[273] Winter 1979, 112.

1914 that 'infantry that can shoot well and that have plenty of ammunition will never let an enemy's infantry come near enough to them to cross bayonets; they will shoot them down first.'[274] As evident of how the war unfolded, his assessment was right, and most of the killing in the trenches happened from a distance.

Based on what veterans have remembered from the war and how they describe events at the time, all forms of distance seem to play a big part in allowing the soldier to kill without severe psychological consequences. When they were close enough to identify with their enemy, the killing could turn traumatic very quickly. Physical distance has been found to have an inhibiting effect on the consequences of these stressors, compared to having to experience them at close-range.[275] It not only removed the soldiers from the certainty of knowledge that it had been their bullet which fell the enemy, but it also removed them from the immediate effects of their actions. Private Rudge, only seventeen years old as he entered the war, wrote about his experience of killing when he had not yet realized the mental repercussions of connecting with his victim:

> This was the first time I had killed anybody and when things quieted down I went and looked at a German I knew I had shot. I remembered thinking that he looked old enough to have a family and I felt very sorry.[276]

The adolescent soldiers who had joined the war for ideological reasons were especially susceptible to rationalizing their kills by the psychological process of *enmification.* Per Grossman's analysis, 'once he begins to herd people like cattle and then to slaughter them like cattle, he very quickly begins to think of them as cattle.'[277] The descriptions of killing in the Great War soldiers' letters and diaries rarely pay attention the enemy as a fellow human being, either avoiding the fact entirely or glossing over it.[278] Harry Yoxall, for example, while once describing the death of an enemy sniper, seemed much more interested in the process of dispatching the mortar bomb than in the fact that he had killed a man.[279] He was a mortar officer, and seems to have coped with his deed by treating it as a job like any other which, if performed well, would reflect on him positively. Joanna Bourke has argued that 'combatants insisted upon emotional relationships and responsibility' with and for their victims, but the evidence points towards the contrary:

[274] Wilkinson 1914, 64.
[275] The resistance to close-range killing of one's own species has been argued to be so great in humans that it is often sufficient to overcome the cumulative influences of the instinct for self-protection, the coercive forces of leadership, and the accountability one feels towards their comrades. See Sion 2016, 560.
[276] Private G.T. Rudge quoted in Middlebrook 2006, 213.
[277] Grossman 1995, 161.
[278] Watson 2008, 70.
[279] IWM, P 317 Con Shelf: H.W. Yoxall, letter to mother, 5 Feb. 1917.

The enemy seems to have been the hardest to kill when they were close and exhibited behavior that the perpetrator could identify with.[280]

In the case of the Great War, the brutality of the battles has been recounted by many historians, but a prime example of how impersonal and efficiency-driven the killing was that machine gunners would set their guns to fire just slightly above the ground, sweeping from side to side over no man's land.[281] In this way men were caught in the legs by the bullets, causing them to fall so that their heads were then in prime position to be hit by another round of bullets. The stress of the battlefield could trigger an extreme type of avoidance in the form of detachment, in which the soldier could enter a stage after the battle was over where it was extremely difficult to recall the details of what had just happened. Some soldiers took this as a blessing, such as the career soldier Francis Crozier, who observed that 'God is merciful and it almost seems as though he chloroforms us on these occasions.'[282] Often the veterans of the Great War would only gain a sense of the order and substance of the battles they were involved in after a historian had pieced together the accounts of the events and put them under a title such as the 'Somme offensive'. For the individual soldiers, battles were often confusing and isolated experiences. On the instant of advance and in the absence of a practicable field radio, fighting men became detached from their order-giving roots, unable to receive signals. Rudyard Kipling remarked that 'men could give hideous, isolated experiences of their own, but no man could recall any connected order of events.'[283] Yoxall recalled that in heated battle 'you lose all your senses' and could often only recall 'a mass of confused memories.'[284] Many of the events that rise from the fog concern singular events of the deaths of certain men: One soldier could distinctly recall a German with a pork-pie hat jumping up and subsequently collapsing 'like a pole-axed ox, with a distinct hole in his throat above the collar.'[285] These events ripped the soldiers from their cognitive dissonance in which they were simply performing their duties, and highlighted the reality in which they were actually partaking in, and on occasion resulted in psychiatric trauma.

A willingness to die for one's country does not necessarily correlate with willingness to take someone else's life for the same reason, and the Great War produced a number of

[280] Bourke 2000, 6.
[281] Jones 2006, 237.
[282] Crozier 2014, 67.
[283] Kipling 1923, 162.
[284] IWM, P 317 Con Shelf: H.W. Yoxall, letter to mother, 24 Sept. 1917.
[285] Belhaven quoted in Winter 1979, 189.

veterans who either truthfully or self-deceptively lived for the rest of their lives under the impression that they never fired a single shot with the mind to kill.[286] Nevertheless, the Great War also undeniably produced a number of soldiers who self-proclaimedly and convincingly enjoyed the process of killing. This can however be partially explained by the results of Swank and Marchand's study of US infantry in north-west Europe which showed that, after sixty days of continuous combat, ninety-eight percent of surviving soldiers were likely to have become psychiatric casualties of some kind, with the remaining two percent exhibiting a predisposition to an 'aggressive psychopathic personality,' which would put the proportion of sociopathic soldiers well-within the boundaries of civilian men.[287] Meanwhile, the group of soldiers who best exemplified humanity's natural aversion towards killing were the men who decided to refrain from the act entirely either through the voluntary decision to not use their weapons to kill, or by committing suicide. Like was the case with Lieutenant Roupell, who had to beat his men to get them to fire at the enemy, another veteran of the Great War has also pointed out that, based on his experiences, non-firers could be a problem in any future war and that it was a great effort for him to make some men fire their rifles to avoid them becoming casualties through inaction.[288] Marshall has explained the reluctance to fire in soldiers as 'an emotional and not an intellectual handicap,' going on to say that it 'is not removable by intellectual reasoning, such as 'kill or be killed''[289] The soldiers who fall under this category could be hypothesized to have failed in the enmification process so utterly that the thought of killing a human being just like them became unbearable enough to endanger their own lives. This still left them with the demands of authority and group absolution, of which Grossman concluded that:

> On the one hand, the soldier can resist the incredibly powerful array of forces that call for him to kill, and he will instantly be denied by his nation, his leaders, and his friends and will most likely be executed along with the other victims of this horror. On the other hand, the soldier can bow before the social and psychological forces that demand that he kill, and in doing so he will be strangely empowered.[290]

The psychiatric consequences to killing that occurred on battlefields can be difficult to distinguish from the disorders that were the result of the threat of dying. Neither of these stressors occurred independently of each other in the trenches, and both were intrinsically

[286] See Grossman 1995, 27.
[287] Two percent is a little less than the expected percentage of sociopaths in the general population, which is estimated between four and five percent. This could result from the fact that antisocial people are usually not so keen on killing as to willingly subscribe to the stringent military environment. Swank & Marchand 1946, 55.
[288] Grossman 1995, 28.
[289] Marshall quoted in Fowers 2015, 283.
[290] Grossman 1995, 209.

tied to physiological stressors present in the frontline, such as hunger and sleep deprivation. However, the case for killing being a particularly strong source of stress on the battlefield is supported by modern psychological research: In the case of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) – recognized for the first time in the Great War under the name 'shell shock' – which was and is commonly associated with the trauma of the uncontrollable aspects of artillery fire, traumas of human origin have been discovered to be a particularly potent cause for psychiatric problems.[291] It has been shown in a number of modern wars that psychiatric battle casualties fluctuated in direct relationship to the wounded rate. Because offensives usually led to far higher physical casualties than defensive operations, it seems that breakdowns were more common during offensive operations when soldiers were given the opportunity to express aggressive instincts.[292] This highlights the destructive effect that forced hostility could have on the troops, and as John Adams thought about war after the traumatic death of his fellow officer, he came to a conclusion:

> What made war so cruel, was the force that compelled you to go on. After a factory explosion you cleared up things and then took every precaution to prevent its recurrence; but in war you did the opposite, you used all your energies to make more explosions. You killed and went on killing.[293]

In saying this, he acknowledged the humanity of his enemy and tied it to the suffering he himself suffered – in doing so recognizing the primary cause for the traumatic effect of killing. The other aspect of his anguish, having to live with the death of his comrades and the constant threat of his own demise, will be explored in the next chapter.

[291] See Davidson & Baum 1990, 252; Maguen et al. 2010, 86–90; Maguen et al. 2009 435–443; Van Winkle & Safer. 2011, 107–10; Green et al. 1990, 729.
[292] See Beebe & DeBakey 1952; Blood & Gauker 1993, 340–4; Jones & Wessely 2001, 242–7.
[293] Adams 1917, 266.

3.2. The Threat of Dying

The fear of dying, or *predation death anxiety*, is the most basic of all evolutionary fears.[294] No one wants to die, and Ben Shalit has uncovered that soldiers prior to deployment reported that the fear of 'death and injury' was their primary fear about battle.[295] However, while killing other people has not been an evolutionary prerequisite, death has lurked around every corner for humans since we first became aware of our own mortality. Throughout history it has often arrived painfully, too soon, or to undeserving people. People have always watched others die around them whilst knowing that they too would eventually die, which is precisely the reason why humans have become quite adequate at psychologically coping with the thought, and why most of the soldiers in the Great War likewise managed to endure it through the conflict. The men on the front were not oblivious to the danger of their circumstances, though depending on the context, their estimations could vary from highly pessimistic to the absurdly hopeful.[296] In the British army, a total of 11,8 percent of all mobilized men were killed, a number that would have been much higher among just the combatant troops, had calculations specifically concerning fighting factions been made.[297] In the trenches the death rates were lower than on more mobile fronts, contrary to the popular perception, and Hew Stratchan has observed accordingly that 'the war would have been far more horrific if there had been no trenches.'[298] However, the implication of the higher rate of psychiatric casualties at the same time is that, for the soldiers, the trenches of the Western Front mostly represented misery from which they were lucky to get out of alive.

If the act of killing requires the *rationalization and acceptance* of the act for the perpetrator to go on without psychologically collapsing, the threat of dying similarly requires defense and coping mechanisms for one's sanity to persist. The Kübler-Ross model – which also partially inspired Dave Grossman's stages of killing – is a system which divides grief into five separate stages based on the emotions which a person must go through when working their way through loss.[299] The five stages of the model are *denial*, *anger*, *bargaining*, *depression* and *acceptance*. The model was inspired by the

[294] Even unicellular organisms have been detected to have receptors that have evolved to react to external dangers in an act of self-preservation. See Castano et al. 2011, 616.
[295] Shalit 1988, 11.
[296] Second Lieutenant Hamilton estimated in 1915 that '90% of Captains & subalterns of infantry will be washed out' before the war, as will '50% of the men.' See IWM, 87/8/1: R.P. Hamilton, letter to cousin, 3 June 1915.
[297] Watson 2008, 20.
[298] Watson 2008, 24; Strachan 2003, 159.
[299] Kübler-Ross & Kessler 2009.

coming-to-terms progress of the terminally ill, but can be implemented into various comparable situations, such as soldiers coming to terms with their mortality on the high-risk environment of a battlefield. In the frontline, the Great War soldier had to deal with both the death of his comrades, and the inescapable possibility of a premature death of his own. In the *denial* phase, soldiers would refrain from considering the possibility, which was both a result of the *positive illusions* that the soldiers tended to gravitate towards regarding their own chances of survival, and of conscious avoidance towards thinking about one's own mortality. *Anger* featured most prominently when a fellow soldier had been killed, and in many circumstances on the battlefield, the reaction could be utilized by directing it into hostilities against the enemy.[300] *Bargaining* could be witnessed in the *religiously* hued ritualistic behavior of the soldiers, and the consecutive *superstitious* illusion that if one only went through the (often arbitrarily) selected motions, they would be spared. *Depression* most commonly showed in the form of apathy in the soldiers, which could take away any interest of actively protecting themselves, but which could also result in the taking of one's own life rather than facing 'the aggression and hostility of a very hostile world.'[301] Finally, the *acceptance* phase was responsible for producing a shared sense of fatalism which prevailed in many of the soldiers' accounts and is remembered by them to have been shared by especially those men who had been on the front for a long time.

It is not so controversial to suggest that there is inherent tragedy in the death of soldiers, which is why – compared to the subject of killing in war – the topic of the attitudes and responses to dying has traditionally been much more approachable for historians. In the Great War context, however, the tone of historiography concerning war casualties has gradually shifted over the years: Starting as heroes, the soldiers turned from heroes to victims during the latter half of the century, and as the veterans themselves withered away the narrative which was built upon tragedy and injustice came to be regarded as the most legitimate one.[302] A.J.P. Taylor's *Illustrated history of the First World War* in 1964 solidified the narrative in which the politicians and generals of the Great War threw away and wasted the lives of the men who had to fight the war on the ground, establishing the picture of them as victims of their circumstance.[303] Since the revisionists have begun to

[300] Grossman 1995, 179.
[301] ibid., 78.
[302] Winter & Prost 2005, 21.
[303] ibid.

take part in the discussion, a new narrative focusing on the soldiers as both active agents and as resilient survivors has emerged. Most historians in either camp have broadly agreed, however, that the fear of death was the most prominent cause of stress for soldiers in the trenches, and thus it is regularly present as a more integral part of any history of the Great War.

In attempting to understand the men's experience on the Western Front, historians sometimes suffer from trying to view the horrors as objectively and impartially as possible. The soldiers, however, were far less keen or even capable of viewing their surroundings objectively, especially if the experience dealt with death anxiety. More often than not, they would either consciously or unconsciously perceive their environment as being ultimately in their favour, an effect of unrealistically optimistic future projections which distort the individual's judgement concerning their own mortality.[304] Dave Grossman has pointed out the prevalence of positive illusions in civilian society as well, and stated that if the fear of death were the primary reason for psychiatric casualties in combat, then 'extreme sports, speeding, and a hundred of other methods to experience a fleeting fear of death wouldn't be as popular.'[305] He acknowledges the fear of death as an important ingredient in creating a psychologically stressful environment in war, but criticizes the thought that it would be the sole, or even main concern of soldiers. As such, even if the potency of the fear of death is acknowledged, one must also acknowledge the psychological mechanisms that humans have in place to cope with the thought.

The study by Shalit that found that the fear of death and injury turns into the fear of letting one's comrades down once combatants have seen battle implies that ascribing the fear of death as soldiers' primary concern is at least partially a correct assumption, but that the battlefield as an environment affects the soldiers in such a way that they 'get used to it', and turn their attention to other things.[306] This assessment falls in line with the Kübler-Ross model while also making sense from a survivalist perspective. The battlefield offers soldiers a limited amount of control over their individual safety, and as such the survival of the group becomes the thing to which they can focus on to in order to contribute their own survival as well. This process is also related to the process of emotional *desensitization*, which through constant exposure to extreme emotional triggers numbs an

[304] Watson 2008, 100–7.
[305] Grossman 1995, 76.
[306] Shalit 1988, 11.

individual's emotional responses.[307] This sort of avoidance has been recorded by many Great War soldiers, especially when recounting situations of extreme stress, such as the heat of the battle. Major Cotton, who saw many of his friends die in action and reflected upon their deaths in his letters, observed the phenomenon by saying that 'somehow war is war and mercifully one's feelings adapt themselves to circumstances which otherwise would be unbearable.'[308] While the soldiers in the frontline often learnt to live with danger, it does not however mean that they suddenly came into terms with the prospect of dying: Rather it is telling of the shifting focus that the soldiers psyche goes through once they are forced to rely on defense and coping mechanisms to endure massive amounts of stress. G.B. Manwaring, a young officer in Kitchener's army of whose letters to his family a portion were published already while he was in active service, stated that fear was with him and his men, but that 'slowly one learns to conquer it, and that makes the achievement the greater.'[309]

The middle-class volunteers of Kitchener's army came from a society which ensured that they were no complete strangers to death even as civilians: Britain in the early twentieth century had not yet discovered treatments for many of the illnesses which are curable today but were deadly back then, and people were much more susceptible to death by accident as well.[310] Death was to be faced courageously, especially if one wished to be a man of 'character'. Middle-class boys and young men were taught to love the fatherland and be ready to sacrifice their lives in its defense. They learned to obey orders and not flinch from danger or unpleasant duty.[311] A soldiers' conduct was tightly associated with masculinity and when the men went to war, cowardice in the face of death was without fail looked down upon as an inherently non-masculine trait.[312] Being called a 'sissy' was the worst thing that could happen to a soldier, and the effect of his peers and the comradeship that formed in the army units simultaneously worked as a way of support, repression, and control.[313] Commentators of the war have consequently said that for combatants the fear of being killed came long way behind the fear of being thought of as a coward. The fear of having one's manhood questioned could sometimes quite literally

[307] Bennett 2016, 735–6.
[308] IWM, 93/25/1: Major Vere E. Cotton, 'Letters from the French & Italian Fronts. 1915-1919', letter to his mother on 15 Oct. 1915.
[309] Manwaring 1918, 119.
[310] Griffiths & Brock 2003, 5–17.
[311] Frevert 2011, 129.
[312] Meyer 2008, 142.
[313] Frevert 2011, 129.

override a fear for one's life by prompting men into reckless behavior, often with fatal consequences.

Lieutenant Edward Chapman recalls a fearless officer colleague, who 'would not take any notice of flares or snipers, and was shot dead, the bullet going from ear to ear.'[314] The social prerequisite towards British Great War officers was for them not to show fear in the face of death, and in some units it became common practice for the officers to never duck, even when under direct fire.[315] The expectations the middle-class volunteers often had about the war had a heroic ideal attached to them, owing to the popular culture of military heroes and war stories, which had emphasized the role of an individual masculine protagonist. In the dueling culture, which was still alive and well in Europe at the time of the war, death was seen as a lesser evil to losing face, and a heroic death was seen by some as a method of validating one's existence and cementing the nature of their character in the minds of others.[316] In the Great War, this sometimes led to endangering oneself as the men sought out opportunities to prove their worth and potentially earn a medal for it.[317] A telling instance of this is how once some men erected a sign '*Gott strafe the Kaiser'* in their segment of the trenches, revealing their position in the process and getting eight men getting killed in the subsequent mortar shoot.[318] As Joanna Bourke points out, however, classical heroism could not ultimately survive the horrors of industrial twentieth century warfare.[319] Had it ever even existed, by 1914 tide-turning war heroes were long since a thing of the past, for the sake of modern weaponry and the resulting long-distance battles.

The military organization at the time of the Great War was not particularly understanding towards soldiers who went through trauma and became incapable of continuing to fight. At the beginning of the Great War, soldiers who broke down were commonly regarded by the contemporary military institution as 'men constitutionally weak of nerve and lacking the power to pull themselves together in the face of an emergency.'[320] This is a telling sign of the lack of understanding of the inner mechanisms of the psyche prevalent

[314] IWM, 92/20/1: E.F. Chapman, letter to mother, 27 Aug. 1916.
[315] Lees 2014, 174.
[316] Technically duelling was illegal in Britain at the time, making it the first European country to have such legislation. See MacMillan 2013, 253–4.
[317] Holmes 2004, 312–3.
[318] *'God punish the emperor'*. W. Cook, quoted in Winter 1979, 92.
[319] Bourke 2000, 137.
[320] RWOCIS 1922, 150; Brown 1919, 833. During the Great War, only 10 percent of the soldiers were thought to be brave. See Bourke 2000, 73.

at the time, which in part influenced how the conditions were structured around the soldiers. While psychology was quickly gaining traction as a respectable science by the twentieth century, it has been accused as being somewhat behind in Britain before the Great War compared to the other sciences developing during this time.[321] Rather than psychological theories, the contemporary English middle-class circles still understood themselves more through spiritual and philosophical concepts, yet they viewed themselves most of all in relation to the established ideas and practices of their social context.[322] The class-consciousness of the contemporary Britain was also well-imbedded into its military organization: The idea was that a certain social background would be a determining factor of a soldier's mental fortitude on the field, and in this hierarchy the middle and upper classes were both naturally placed at the top. A much higher emphasis was given to the natural characteristics of a soldier, and not the effects of wartime circumstances with a power to democratize groups of soldiers by eliciting universal human responses in all of them. The Great War subsequently transformed many people's beliefs about the nature of courage, of which Lord Moran serves as a great example, later recording that what he took away from the war was that courage 'is willpower that can be spent – and when it is used up – men are finished.'[323]

The ways in which a soldier could get injured and die in the trenches were numerous and unpleasant. Machine guns could mow them down while advancing through no man's land, or they might be knocked out by a sniper's bullet while enjoying a cup of 'char' a step too close to the parapet.[324] A grenade, a gas shell, or a mortar might drop on their location and either do them in right then and there, or otherwise incapacitate them; and if they survived through that, nature could still claim them through weather or disease.[325] The constant threat was vividly encapsulated by Manwaring's letter in which he nonchalantly mentioned how life was proven to still be interesting as he had just found a 'Hun' disguised as a bush, but that the constant strain of danger was beginning to tell also.[326] The trench environment was unforgiving, yet many soldiers never lost the hope that peace was just around the corner. This was especially true for many of the Kitchener's volunteers in the initial stages of the war, when they could still believe they would be

[321] Thomson 2006, 17; Hearnshaw 1964, 120.
[322] Thomson 2006, 38–39.
[323] Wilson 2007, 67.
[324] Char meaning '*Tea'* in its popular variation in the military context.
[325] Atenstaedt 2011, 31–45.
[326] Manwaring 1918, 106.

'home before Xmas.'[327] Belief in an imminent end to the war was helpful in maintaining both the men's mental stability and army discipline, because it encouraged soldiers to focus on short-term rather than cumulative risk. The fact that the human mind is not statistically inclined can be seen in the horrors of the war which get pronounced visibility in the letters and diaries of the soldiers, of which artillery and gas are a suitable example.

Upon arriving at the front, men were often ignorant of the power of modern weaponry. One British soldier described shells as being first 'quite a novelty' and didn't feel frightened because he 'didn't know anything about them.'[328] Sentiments such as these could not last long on the battlefield, however, and the soldiers of the Great War have consequently been described as having gone insane from just the wait of another shelling on their position.[329] While this may be an exaggeration, the aspects of artillery fire that incited fear in soldiers speak of the construction of the human mind. The features which soldiers bring up frequently – and are also frequently noted by historians – are the noise of the weapons, their unpredictability, and the helplessness of individuals under a barrage; all of which are recognized in military research as prominent battlefield stressors.[330] Gas, despite of its much less lethal effect, was the other popular weapon to feature in poetry and war stories meant to shock the audience.[331] In his poem *Dulce et decorum est*, the famous Great War poet Wilfred Owen used gas specifically to underline the horrors he had witnessed:

> Gas! GAS! Quick, boys! An ecstasy of fumbling / Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time / But someone still was yelling out and stumbling / And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime / Dim through the misty panes and thick green light / As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.[332]

Lieutenant Arthur Behrend would similarly describe the noise of the artillery barrage as 'so intense that it seemed as if hundred devils were hammering my brain.'[333] Both weapons share the sense of a loss of control which come from being subjected to them, artillery with its unpredictability, and gas with its insidious tendency to leave pools of residue to wait the unsuspecting soldier to take cover in an infested dugout, only to find themselves blind and suffocating. This loss of control is the most commonly emphasized cause of psychiatric stress by historians, which is also likely partially responsible for the

[327] IWM, 84/22/1: B.O. Dewes, diary, 29 Nov. 1914.
[328] An unknown soldier quoted in Watson 2008, 86.
[329] It should be noted that the famous Great War poets focused less the Spanish Flu than the carnage dealt by industrial weapons.
[330] Driskell & Salas 1991, 185.
[331] Statistics of BEF since 1916 (when accurate figures started to be kept) show that only two to three percent of gas casualties were fatal. See Winter 1979, 125.
[332] Wilfred Owen's poem 'Dulce et decorum est' quoted in Stallworthy 2014, 109.
[333] Behrend 1963, 53.

fact that killing has been interpreted as less stressful than dying.[334] The reason why many of the descriptions of the most traumatic weapons of the war are so stylized – like Owen's and Behrend's are – may result from the middle-class soldiers' understanding of their familiar literary tradition. In writing about their traumatic experiences, soldiers often found it frustrating that they could not convey the pure experience in words and thus resorted to clichés and quoted rhetoric of the classics, thus reconstructing their experiences retrospectively to a story form that they could recognize. Some soldiers were even aware of their literary bias, such as Alexander Aitken, who once recalled that in the midst of battle 'no thought of death came, only some phrase like 'sledge-hammer blow,' from a serial read years before in a boys' magazine.'[335] It was Aitkens who noted that upon attempting to describe the events 'truthfully', he ended up weakening it to the 'merely clinical,' which indicates that the style of stripped down realism was far too alien to most men for them to write about their experiences even with an attempted objectivity. Upon learning that euphemisms such as *sharp* and *brisk* fighting meant that about fifty percent of a company had been killed or wounded in a raid, Aitken noted that 'a future historian, if he learned at all on these carefully sieved accounts, would be quite misled.'[336]

The soldiers would consciously and unconsciously attempt to cope with these battlefield stressors through defense and coping mechanisms. One of the most prominent features of the human psyche which manifested in the trenches was the focus on the short-term, which ties to the phenomenon of positive illusions. Historians have on occasion explained the unrealistic optimism found on battlefields as a form of inability to imagine one's own death: Niall Ferguson for once has ascribed to the Freudian worldview which asserts that 'no instinct we possess is ready for a belief in [their own] death'.[337] And indeed, soldiers' diaries and letters usually depict a highly optimistic attitude towards one's own survival chances, which Watson believes stems not only from fantasy, but from the men's biased interpretation of the trench environment in their own favour.[338] 'The nature of risk is shaped by the time horizon,' and in short-term thinking death didn't seem as impending: Outside of action an average of one man per six days was killed, while in battles the average was six men per a day.[339] Such intense action was very rare, however, and the

[334] See Watson 2008; Bourke 2000; Ferguson 2003; Jones 2006.
[335] Aitken quoted in Fussell 2009, 185.
[336] ibid., 191.
[337] Ferguson 2003, 365.
[338] Watson 2008, 100.
[339] Quote from Bernstein 1996, 197; Statistics from Watson 2008, 102.

Great War artillery was also notoriously inaccurate – a fact which was also noted by the soldiers.[340] When the British realized that bullets as well only rarely inflicted mortal injuries, they began to wish for 'Blighties', minor injuries that would be their ticket home.[341] When the middle-class ranker Arthur Wrench finally received his – who had by then seen the battles of Somme and the third Ypres – he praised the lord for he was finally wounded enough to go home.[342] Normally soldiers did possess a slight measure of control over their own fates: Mortar bombs could sometimes be dodged and shell trajectories learnt to be recognized through the whizzing sound they produced. The problem with this was that the men tended to become optimistic of their skills and the control they provided them, which has led to Watson concluding that:

> By imposing an imagined structure and order on the frightening and unpredictable environment in which they operated, soldiers made it seem less chaotic and threatening and provided themselves with a sense of security and empowerment crucial for mental health.[343]

A possible explanation for the positive illusions present in the trenches can also be found in a study carried out by psychologists Shelley Taylor and Jonathon Brown, in which they found that individuals 'possess unrealistically positive views of themselves, an exaggerated belief in their ability to control their environment, and a view of the future that maintains that their future will be far better than the average person's.'[344] They argue that positive illusions 'may be especially apparent and adaptive under circumstances of adversity, that is, circumstances that might be expected to produce depression or lack of motivation.'[345]

Religious faith also provided mental support for many British troops, both as a reassurance of continued life, and comfort in death.[346] In the absence of a promise of security, certainty, and control in their everyday world, men easily turned to the supernatural for comfort. The desire for control was so strong that even with the implication that God was behind the carnage and bloodshed all around them, religion provided the soldiers with a sense of security in an ultimate 'plan' for them, rather than them having to succumb to nihilism. Though extreme piety existed within some units and

[340] Of the 1,5 million shells fired during the seven-day bombardment preceding the opening of the Somme offensive, for example, inflicted less than 7000 casualties. Watson 2008, 30, 103.
[341] 'Blighty' meant 'England' – or in this context an injury that would get one there – and was military jargon derived from hindi, much like the aforementioned term 'char' for tea.
[342] IWM, 85/51/1: A.E. Wrench, diary, 24 March 1918.
[343] Watson 2008, 107.
[344] Taylor & Brown 1988, 196.
[345] ibid., 201.
[346] Watson 2008, 95.

among certain individuals, the 'diffusive Christianity' thought characteristic of the contemporary British society at the time was not such a huge influencer in the trenches as one may have thought.[347] The spirituality that manifested in the trenches was much less institutionally guided than rising from an inward turned sense of spirituality and superstition.[348] Soldiers adopted rituals as superstitious bargaining tools against death: Arthur Wrench recorded a manifestation of everyday superstition of men who he said carried New Testament in their breast pockets in the hope that it might stop a bullet from entering their hearts 'even if its only other use,' as Wrench would go on to say, 'is for convenient piece of paper to light a cigarette.'[349] Amulets and rituals were tangible, but their popularity stemmed from the religious implication that following certain 'rules' could be the ticket to one's salvation. In order to control their own fate, soldiers gravitated towards actions that helped them maintain the illusion that they had a say in whether or not they would die. This is evident in an instance of a British soldier who was captured by Germans in 1917 and attributed his deliverance from danger not directly to God but to the fact that he dutifully prayed throughout combat.[350]

In the Great War diaries and letters of Kitchener's army, death features prominently time and time again, and it is written about in a variety of tones – sometimes even in a positive light. Just like the euphemisms that soldiers had for when they killed an enemy, they had a list of ways to refer to the death of their comrades that sounded less worse than 'getting killed' or 'dying'. A comrade might 'go West', 'go under', or 'go out of it', or they may be 'knocked out' like their enemy counterparts.[351] According to Watson, humour in the Great War was used widely to re-interpret the environment positively to make it seem less threatening.[352] Mockery in particular played a significant role for the soldiers: while it was easy to be frightened of a machinegun or shellfire, a weapon called 'chattering Charlie' appeared less frightening. Humour also enabled men to cope with their wishes as well as their fears: Humourous songs could air the soldier's desire to be away from the war without it being taken as a statement of low morale or a weak character, and thus this outlet prevented the unspoken desires to overwhelm the soldiers and to prevent them from

[347] The effect of Christianity showed even in the common rituals, however, and a quickly uttered 'Our Father' has been speculated by Watson to have been the most common protective ritual used on the Western Front. See Watson 2008, 96.
[348] Watson 2008, 97.
[349] IWM, 85/51/1: A.E. Wrench, diary, 21 July 1917. Other amulets the soldiers would carry with them included crucifixes, scapulars, agnus dei, and consecrated coins. Watson 2008, 97.
[350] Watson 2008, 99.
[351] Fussell 2009, 192.
[352] Watson 2008, 90.

doing their duty. In one popular song, both the fear for one's own life and the resulting desire to leave the frontline was such that could not have been tolerated by the military hierarchy, had it not been voiced in such an ironic and light-hearted fashion:

> I want to go home, I want to go home / Coal boxes and shrapnel they whistle and roar I don't want to go in the trenches no more / I want to go over the sea / Where the Kaiser can't shoot bombs at me / Oh my! I don't want to die / I want to go home.[353]

Modern psychological research has found that humans demonstrate an increased liking for 'hostile' humour following uncontrollable experiences, and it seems that through humanizing the horror of the war, humour made the soldiers' situation more manageable and kept men from becoming apathetic.[354] Humour could even be used to alleviate the pressing sense of dread that came about when gas was introduced to the battlefield: While makeshift warning bells for gas were set up out of empty shell cases, one unit put up a sign next to one that read: 'Beat this gong, grab your gun, and prepare to meet the bloody Hun.'[355]

In the ascetic conditions of the trenches, even the most basic creature comforts could bring the men back from any pit, like when Private Fleet observed that 'with rest, food and drink we became normal human beings again.'[356] The importance of providing soldiers with enough and adequately varied sustenance is emphasized by military psychology even today, and food and rest are treated as the two most effective on-scene treatments to acute combat stress reactions.[357] The trench timetable was also deliberately fixed throughout the war, and the monotony and routine probably helped dull soldiers' consciousness of time, consequently hindering consideration for war's duration while providing them with a sense of order to the entropy which surrounded them in a charge or an artillery barrage.[358] Manwaring described the monotony of the life in the dugouts in a particularly heavily shelled area:

> Packed like sardines we lie and try to snatch some moments' sleep; shave in our breakfast tea, and clean our teeth in our lunch-time coffee, and wash not at all. With revolvers by our sides, and respirators on our chests, we live in the perpetual night of underground, coming to the surface to work or see a little of God's sunshine, or explore as shells permit and the spirit moves us. Time as a measure has ceased to be and our watches serve just as checks on our movements.[359]

[353] Skirth 2010, 49.
[354] Trice 1982, 1148.
[355] Holmes 2004, 257
[356] Private G.A. Fleet, quoted in Liddle 1985, 222.
[357] Manning 1991, 459–60.
[358] Watson 2008, 100.
[359] Manwaring 1918, 91.

Because of the prolonged times of inactivity that prevailed in trench warfare, many soldiers would focus on the weather and conditions to avoid the other aspects of their unfortunate circumstances. Vermin that cohabited the dugouts with the soldiers were likened to the enemy through humour, which could be used to reinforce enmification through proxy.[360] Perhaps the most blatant and tangible forms of avoidance was the constant card playing in the trenches, which was ubiquitous during shellfire, and how some soldiers would even engage in folk singing during bombardments to distract themselves.[361] The soldiers seldom thought too far ahead as it may have led to them considering the likelihood that they may not make it until the end of the war.

Even if the men were by and large efficient at avoiding constant thoughts of their own death, there was one instance which could almost without fail penetrate through the layers of soldiers' self-preserving mechanisms of willful ignorance. Edward Norman Gladden, who had begun his civil career just before the war as a junior civil servant and would go on to gain recognition on the field later in life, describes experiencing such event as a soldier after the dust had settled on the battlefield:

> Never before had I seen a man who had just been killed. A glance was enough … The smell of blood mixed with the fumes of the shell filled me with nausea. Only a great effort saved my limbs from giving way beneath me. I could see from the sick grey faces of the file that these feelings were generally shared. A voice seemed to whisper with unchallengeable logic, 'Why shouldn't you be next?'[362]

The sight of a corpse could trigger the most primal of all fears, especially if the victim was freshly deceased or someone the soldier had known. Wilfrid Ewart, who had received a commission for his good pedigree despite of his poor health, recorded seeing a whole company unable to keep from turning to witness a dead man who seemed almost asleep, and being visibly shaken as a result.[363] Charles Bird observed that 'for weeks the men suffer from intense fright as comrades are killed or horribly mutilated.'[364] The experience thereafter, of observing the dead and imagining the circumstances of their death by drawing from the vivid and often gruesome details of the carnal state of the bodies while relating it all to the thought of their own mortality, can be read from the pages written by some soldiers who showed startling levels of fascination with the corpses of the fallen. The trivial attitude and mundane thoughts that got mixed in with the macabre imagery are

[360] Quinn & Trout 2001, 41.
[361] Watson 2008, 105.
[362] N. Gladden quoted in Winter 1979, 133.
[363] Ewart 1933, 96. Ewart perished in the war, but his work continued to be published posthumously by his friends and colleagues in the following decades.
[364] Bird 1917, 333.

evidence to both how jaded some soldiers were to the scenes they had witnessed over and over again, and the force with which their unconscious minds were working to divert their attention and compartmentalize the visions presented to it. Young Private Thomas Hope wrote about his own special encounter with a dead man, which is jarringly different from the deeply emotional occasion described above:

> Death lies about in all its forms. A limbless body here, the tunic fitting the swollen body like a glove. He may have wanted a tunic to fit him like that all his life – he gets it in death. A body without a head like a rumjar without a label. A form fast turning green, lying in a pool of grey-green gas vomit. Death in a thousand different masks. A youngster not much older than myself is bringing his inside up. Poor blighter. It's a pity. Heaven knows when our next rations will arrive.[365]

In instances where a soldier found himself wounded, he would cease any thoughts about the battle itself. Commonly the soldiers recall a profound state of exhaustion, such as one soldier felt after being buried by dirt after shellfire. He could not quite decide whether he was alive or not, and recalls only wanting to sleep.[366] The concern the soldiers had towards those they had left home on occasion exceeded the regard for their own lives, and The Field Service Post Card, which in itself is a testament to the uniform and identity erasing army culture, was most often sent home right after battle, with everything crossed out except 'I am quite well'.[367] The focus of soldiers was also often not on the pain they themselves experienced on the fields, but the suffering of those at home who they'd be leaving behind. A military padre described a situation where on the eve of a battle once, a soldier had approached him to tell him the addresses of his father and his sweetheart so that the padre could write to them if he fell. 'In the last battle,' he had said, 'one of my brothers was killed and another wounded. If I fall I shall die without regrets and with a heart content; but it will go hard with those at home… These are terrible times for those at home.'[368]

Sometimes the men could enter a state in which soldiers worn down by mental or physical exhaustion became so passive and indifferent that they took very little trouble to protect themselves.[369] This apathy could be interpreted to have been the result of emotional desensitization. Former U.S. Army psychologist Paul Ekman has proposed that out of the six distinct 'basic emotions' (anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise), the ones most susceptible to desensitization are fear, happiness, and sadness.[370] Prolonged

[365] Hope 1937, 39.
[366] E. Kingsbury quoted in Winter 1979, 194.
[367] Fussell 2009, 199. A Field Service Postcard can be found in appendices, as '*Picture 1*'.
[368] Tiplady 1918, 66.
[369] Watson 2008, 89.
[370] Isaac 2016, 487.

exposure to killing and the threat of being killed wore men down: In the Second World War G. W. B. James observed that by late 1942 there was 'a complete and utter exhaustion which recalled some of the days in the 1914-18 war, when men coming out of the line would look wrinkled, yellow and apathetic.'[371] According to him, troops 'got tired of fighting' and that brief periods of time away from the frontline 'did little to restore the cumulative effects of constant mental strain.'[372] As the soldiers developed greater awareness of danger as time passed on the front, they became both increasingly fatalistic of the possible consequences, and less likely to engage in a battle that did not seem worth the risk. By Watson's interpretation, these risk-assessment strategies lay at the heart of men's adaptation to the Western Front, and as the time the soldiers spent on the front increased, the differences between their abilities to cope with the prolonged stress became more apparent.[373] Similarly, however, after a time the duration of service had weeded out those who could not deal with the reality of trench warfare. For the British, a sample of two hundred British troops suffering from psychiatric disorders discovered that their average length of field service was at ten months.[374]

[371] James 1955, 57.
[372] ibid, 98.
[373] Watson 2008, 85.
[374] Pearn 1919, 105.

4. Conclusions

This study examined the war experience of British middle-class volunteers of Kitchener's army in the Great War trenches. The purpose of this study was to understand *how the war affected the soldiers, and why they reacted to it the way they did.* In answering these questions, the study aimed to uncover how this group of people experienced the Great War to better the understanding of both how the War was shaped by its combatants, and how the War shaped them in turn. Through offering an interpretation of how the first modern war affected its soldiers, the study also strove to add to the pool of knowledge which examines the questions of how humans psychologically respond to industrial warfare.

To answer the study's primary research questions, the Great War was examined through four features, which were deemed to have been most integral to shaping the combatants' experience of the war. These features were; the *military organization,* the soldiers' *brothers in arms,* the *act of killing,* and the *threat of dying*. The method with which these aspects of the war were studied was the analysis of the soldiers' self-reported experiences of the war through letters and diaries they wrote in the trenches, and their retrospective war memoirs. To better understand the soldiers' perspective, works of both historical and psychological research literature were also utilized to contextualize their experiences within the broader contemporary British middle-class culture, and the studied psychological responses to war. The findings of this study benefited from the theoretical framework which studied the soldiers' experience as shaped by their psychology, and coloured by their cultural context; and through these means, the study was able to find adequate answers to its primary research questions.

The British military organization was found to be one of the two features of the Great War which by and large helped the soldiers to carry on. The British Expeditionary Force formed an underlying hierarchy structure which took Kitchener's middle-class recruits from the world they had inhabited as civilians, and into an environment which emphasized the group over the individual while demanding strict deference to its in-built hierarchies. Upon joining the army, the recruits were almost completely removed from their old social context and introduced to a system which dictated their every move while also sustaining them and intentionally enforcing bonding between the men who shared the experience with one another. The soldier's *brothers in arms* were the human

component woven into the larger system of the military. The middle-class members of Kitchener's army formed relationships with their fellow soldiers which have been recounted by many of them to have been their highest source of motivation for continuing with the war when it became unbearable. The military code of conduct was informed by the wider systems of social stratification of contemporary Britain, which mostly helped with members of different social classes to adapt into their roles in the army. The social relationships the men formed with one another became a psychological and emotional crutch through which they could tolerate their circumstances on the front, which were often near-unbearable, however made easier by the shared camaraderie.

As one of the most potentially traumatic human experiences, the *act of killing* formed one of the core elements of Kitchener's soldiers' war experience. It was one of the two strains of war which represented a counterpoint to the two psychologically sustaining features of the war. The primary sources were examined through both Dave Grossman's model of five stages of killing, and the conscious and unconscious defense and coping mechanisms which are triggered in times of stress. Out of these psychological mechanisms, evidence of rationalization, dehumanization, and desensitization featured most prominently in the used primary sources. The other traumatic feature of the war was the *threat of dying*, which the soldiers also had to learn to cope with if they wished to perform their role effectively. Through using Elizabeth Kübler-Ross' model of five stages of grief, the soldier's texts were examined to make sense of how they were approaching the prospect of their own death. The soldiers' reactions were also examined through conscious and unconscious defense and coping mechanisms, of which positive illusions, religion and superstition, and humour featured most prominently in the primary sources.

What this study's results imply is that while the soldiers had distinctly individual experiences of their own, they were characterized by a set of culturally and psychologically guided features, which hold within themselves a level of predictability. The middle-class background of the studied soldiers provided them with a distinct level of similarity, while their reactions could also be understood through analyzing them from the perspective of modern psychological research. Of the four features of war studied, the communal aspects of the military hierarchy and one's brothers in arms seem to have been key in helping the men persevere and continue fighting. Through the help of their fellow soldiers, the ones who survived the war with their psyche intact could face the two principal strains of war – the act of killing and the threat of dying – without collapsing.

The soldiers' mental mechanisms of coping were interwoven with their social identity, and the culture of the British middle-class men in the Great War informed them of their purpose and role in the conflict. Nevertheless, they still required the continuing presence and support of the social aspects of the battlefield to realize their purpose there.

The scope of this study sets some limitations to the reliability of its conclusions, as the nature and amount of source material used to draw the study's conclusions contain only a small section of the Kitchener's middle-class volunteers. However, the nature of the study's chosen theoretic framework and research tradition means it also only represents one possible interpretation of the soldiers' experience, grounded in historical interpretation. Though while doing so it ultimately both simplifies the nuances in the experiences of each individual, as well as makes generalizations of the whole based on a few sampled accounts, the results are not unreliable. Rather they represent a valuable addition to the general discussion of the British soldiers' experiences on the Western Front, and have raised new questions such as to what extent were the soldiers conscious of their own situation: If they were they aware of the social pressures which drove them to join the Kitchener's volunteers in the first place, and how much of the defense and coping mechanisms used by them were conscious ways to avoid their immediate reality? As such, any future research could build on this study's results examining in more detail one of the four features examined in this study. They could also expand on how it both influenced the soldiers in its own right, and in conjunction with the other studied aspects of the war. From the soldiers' perspective, as the scientific understanding of the human psyche expands and becomes more accurate, historical wars could be revisited and re-analyzed for a more informed understanding of the experience of past soldiers as they went to war from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

Bibliography

Archival Sources

DEPARTMENT OF DOCUMENTS, IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM, LONDON (IWM)

Papers of E.F. Chapman	IWM 92/20/1
Papers of V. E. Cotton	IWM 93/25/1
Papers of B.O. Dewes	IWM 84/22/1
Papers of R.P. Hamilton	IWM 87/8/1
Papers of A.E Henderson	IWM PP/MCR/190
Papers of R.M. Lester	IWM P 271
Papers of I.V.B. Melhuish	IWM PP/MCR/69
Papers of G. Roupell	IWM DOCS
Papers of A.R. Williams	IWM 82/26/1
Papers of A.E. Wrench	IWM 85/51/1
Papers of H.W. Yoxall	IWM P 317 Con Shelf

Printed Sources

Adams J. B. P. 1917. *Nothing of Importance: A Record of Eight Months at the Front with a Welsh Battalion, October, 1915, to June, 1916*. Methuen.

Aldington R. 1930. *Death of a hero*. NY Books.

Behrend A. 1963. *As from Kemmel Hill*. Eyre & Spottiswoode.

Bion W. R. 1982. *The Long Week-End 1897-1919, Part of a Life*. Karnac Books.

Bird C. 1917. "From Home to the Charge: A psychological study of the soldier." *The American Journal of Psychology* 28.3. pp. 315-348.

Birmingham G. A.1919. *A padre in France*. Hodder & Stoughton.

Blacker J. 2000. *Have You Forgotten Yet?: The First World War Memoirs of CP Blacker.* Pen & Sword Books.

Brown W. 1919. "WAR NEUROSIS: A COMPARISON OF EARLY CASES SEEN IN THE FIELD WITH THOSE SEEN AT THE BASE." *The Lancet*, 193(4994). pp. 833-836.

Coppard G. 1969. *With a machine gun to Cambrai: the tale of a young Tommy in Kitchener's army 1914-1918*. H.M.S.O.

Crozier F.P. 2014. *A Brass Hat In No Man's Land*. Pickle Partners Publishing.

Douglas S. 1963. *Years of Combat*. Collins.

Ewart W. H. G. 1933. *When Armageddon Came: Studies in Peace and War*. Rich & Cowan Limited.

Feilding R. C. 1929. *War letters to a wife: France and Flanders, 1915-1919.* The Medici Society.

Gibbs A. H. 1920. *The grey wave*. Hutchinson.

Graham, S. 1919. *A Private in the Guards.* Macmillan.

Hankey D. W. A. 1917. *A student in arms.* EP Dutton.

Hay I. 1916. *The First Hundred Thousand: Being the Unofficial Chronicle of a Unit of" K (1),"*. Houghton Mifflin.

Heath A. G. edited by Murray G. 1917. *Letters of Arthur George Heath*. B.H. Blackwell.

Hope T. 1937. *The Winding Road Unfolds*. G.P. Putnam's sons.

Keable R. 1919. *Standing by: war-time reflections in France and Flanders*. Nisbet & Company Limited.

Kipling R. 1923. *The Irish guards in the great war / edited and compiled from their diaries and studys*. Macmillan.

Manwaring G.B. 1918. *If we return: letters of a soldier of Kitchener's army*. John Lane Company.

Martin B.K. 1987. *Poor Bloody Infantry*. J. Murray.

Nettleton J. 1979. *The Anger of the Guns: An Infantry Officer on the Western Front*. Kimber.

Pearn N. 1919. "Psychoses in the Expeditionary Forces." *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 65.269. pp. 101-108.

Priestley J.B. 1963. *A Writer's Reminiscences and Reflections.* Reprint Society.

Procter T.H. 1920. "The Motives of the Soldier" *International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. 31, No. 1. pp. 26-50.

Reith J. 1966. *Wearing Spurs*. Hutchinson.

Rogerson S. 1933. *Twelve Days*. Hyperion Books.

RWOCIS 1922. *Report of the War Committee of Enquiry into 'Shell-Shock'*. edited by War Office. HMSO.

Sassoon S. 2012. *War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon.* Courier Corporation.

Stewart H.A. 1916. *From Mons to Loos, Being the Diary of a Supply Officer*. W. Blackwood and Sons.

Tiplady T. 1918. *The Soul of the Soldier: Sketches of Life at the Front*. Methuen.

Tucker J. F. 2015. *Johnny Get Your Gun: A Personal Narrative of the Somme, Ypres and Arras.* Pen and Sword.

Wilkinson S. 1914. *First lessons in war*. Methuen.

Research Literature

Alós-Ferrer C. 2016. "Cognitive Dissonance". *The SAGE Encyclopedia of War: Social Science Perspectives* 2016. edited by Paul Joseph. SAGE Publications. pp. 324-326.

Ashworth T. 1980. *Trench Warfare, 1914-1918: The Live And Let Live System*. Holmes & Meier.

Atenstaedt R. 2011. *The medical response to the trench diseases in World War One.* Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Baynes J.C. 1967. *Morale*. Praeger.

Beebe G.W. & DeBakey M.E. 1952. Battle Casualties. Incidence, Mortalirty, and Logistics Considerations. Thomas.

Bennett J. 2016. "Group Absolution". *The SAGE Encyclopedia of War: Social Science Perspectives* 2016. edited by Paul Joseph. SAGE Publications. pp. 735-738.

Bernstein P. L. 1996. *Against the gods: The remarkable story of risk*. Wiley.

Blood C. G., & Gauker, E. D. 1993. "The relationship between battle intensity and disease rates among Marine Corps infantry units." *Military medicine*, 158(5). pp. 340-344.

Blom P. 2010. *The vertigo years: Europe, 1900-1914*. Basic Books.

Bourke J. 2005. *Fear: a cultural history*. Virago.

Bourke J. 2000. *Intimate history of killing: face-to-face killing in twentieth-century warfare.* Granta Books.

Bourke J. 2004. "'Remembering'War." *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol 39(4), pp. 473-485.

Castano E., et al. 2011. "Ideology, fear of death, and death anxiety." *Political Psychology* 32.4. pp. 601-621.

Cecil, H. & Liddle, P. 2003. *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experience*. Pen and Sword.

Cole S. 2001. "Modernism, Male Intimacy, and the Great War." *ELH*, 68(2). pp. 469-500.

Cramer P. 1998. "Coping and defense mechanisms: What's the difference?". *Journal of Personality*, 66(6). pp. 919-946.

Davidson L. M. & Baum A. 1990. "Posttraumatic stress in children following natural and human-made trauma." in *Handbook of developmental psychopathology*. pp. 251-259. Springer US.

Dietrich C.E. 2016. "Milgram Experiments". *The SAGE Encyclopedia of War: Social Science Perspectives* 2016. edited by Paul Joseph. SAGE Publications. pp. 1063-1066.

Driskell J. & Salas E.1991. "Overcoming the Effects of Stress on Military Performance: Human Factors, Training, and Selection strategies." *Handbook of military psychology*. edited by Gal R. E. & Mangelsdorff A. John Wiley & Sons.

Fearon James D. 1999. "What Is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)?". Unpublished manuscript. Stanford University.
[Retrieved from
https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/39722/758yoziw9eo36uov7hv.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1502723228&Signature=QQ0MC6zscfQ00GLmFt9E4%2F%2BpgFw%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DWhat_is_Identity_as_We_Now_Use_the_Word.pdf
August the fourteenth 2017]

Ferguson N. 2003. *Pity of war*. Basic Books.

Fowers, B. 2015. *The evolution of ethics: Human sociality and the emergence of ethical mindedness*. Springer.

Frevert U. 2011. *Emotions in History – Lost and Found*. Central European University Press.

Fussell P. 2009. *The Great War and modern memory*. Sterling Publishing Company, Inc.

Gough Barry 2014. *Pax Britannica: Ruling the Waves and Keeping the Peace before Armageddon*. Springer.

Green B.L. et al. 1990. "Risk factors for PTSD and other diagnoses in a general sample of Vietnam veterans." *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 147.6. pp 729.

Griffith P. 1996. *Battle Tactics of the Western Front: The British Army's Art of Attack, 1916-18*. Yale University Press.

Griffiths C. & Brock A. 2003. "Twentieth century mortality trends in England and Wales." *Health Statistics Quarterly* 18.2. pp. 5-17.

Grinker R. R. & Spiegel J. P. 1945. *Men under stress*. J. & A. Churchill.

Grossman D. 1995. *On killing: The psychological costs of killing in war and society*. Little, Brown and Company.

Hart S.B.H.L. 1935. *A history of the world war, 1914-1918.* Little, Brown.

Hearnshaw L. 1964. *A short history of British psychology: 1840-1940.* Methuen & Co, ltd.

Heathorn Stephen 2004. "How Stiff were their Upper Lips? Research on Late-Victorian and Edwardian Masculinity". *History Compass*, Vol. 2, No. 1. Wiley Online Library.

Henman L.D. 2001. *Humour as a coping mechanism: Lessons from POWs*. pp. 89-94.

Holmes R. 2004. *Tommy: the British soldier on the Western Front, 1914-1918.* HarperCollins*Publishers.*

Horne Christine 2003. "The Internal Enforcement of Norms". *European Sociological Review*, Vol. 19, No. 4. Oxford University Press. pp. 335-343.

Housman, L. (Ed.) 2002. *War letters of fallen Englishmen*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Hyman I. E. & Loftus E. F. 1998. "Errors in autobiographical memory." *Clinical psychology review*, 18(8). pp. 933-947.

Isaac L.M. 2016. "Desensitization". *The SAGE Encyclopedia of War: Social Science Perspectives* 2016. edited by Paul Joseph. SAGE Publications. pp. 485-488.

James G. W. B. 1955. "Narrative, resume, comments and conclusions concerning Middle East force from September 1940 to July 1943." *typescript* 57:39.

Jones E. & Wessely S. 2001. "Psychiatric battle casualties: an intra-and interwar comparison." *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 178.3. pp. 242-247.

Jones E. 2006. "The Psychology of Killing: The Combat Experience of English Soldiers during the First World War." *Journal of Contemporary History*, 41:2. pp. 229-246.

Keegan J. 1978. *The Face of Battle*. Penguin.

Keegan J. 2011. *The First World War*. Random House.

Kellett A. 1990. "The Soldier in Battle: Motivational and Behavioral Aspects of the Combat Experience. *Psychological dimensions of war*. edited by Glad B. Newbury Park.

Kocka J. 1995. "The Middle Classes in Europe". *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 67, No. 4. The University of Chicago Press. pp. 783-806.

Kübler-Ross E. & Kessler D. 2009. "The five stages of grief." [Retrieved from http://www.gentlecarehospiceca.com/sites/default/files/inservice/Lessons-Five_Stages_of_Grief.pdf June the third 2017.]

Lapinski M. & Rajiv R. 2005. “An Explication of Social Norms”. *Communication Theory*, Vol 15, No. 2. International Communication Association. pp. 127-147.

Lees G. 2014. *Thankful and Not So Thankful: How the Great War changed three English villages forever*. Memoirs Publishing.

Levsen Sonja 2008. "Constructing Elite Identities: University Students, Military Masculinity and the Consequences of the Great War in Britain and Germany". *Past & Present*, No. 198. Oxford University Press on behalf of The Past and Present Society. pp. 147-183.

Liddle P. 1979. *Testimony of War 1914-1918*. Published by Michael Russell.

Liddle P. 1985. *The Soldier’s War 1914–1918*. Sterling.

Little R. 1964. "Buddy Relations and Combat Performance." in M. Janowitz (ed.) *The New Military*. Russell Sage.

MacDonald R.H. 1989. "Reproducing the Middle-Class Boy: From Purity to Patriotism in the Boys' Magazines,1892-1914". *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 24, No. 3. Sage Publications, Ltd. pp. 519-539

MacMillan M. 2013. *The war that ended peace: How Europe abandoned peace for the First World War.* Random House.

Maguen S. et al. 2009. "The impact of killing in war on mental health symptoms and related functioning." *Journal of traumatic stress* 22.5. pp. 435-443.

Maguen S. et al. 2010. "The impact of reported direct and indirect killing on mental health symptoms in Iraq war veterans." *Journal of traumatic stress* 23.1. pp 86-90.

Mangan J.A. 1987. *Manliness and morality: Middle-class masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*. Manchester University Press.

Manning F. 1991. "Morale, Cohesion and esprit de Corps." *Handbook of military psychology*. edited by Gal R. E. & Mangelsdorff A. John Wiley & Sons.

Mapother E. 1936. "Discussion on Functional Nervous Disease in the Fighting Services." *Proc. R. Soc. Med.*, 29, 855859.

Marshall S.L.A. 1947. *Men against fire*. William Morrow.

McDonald M., Navarrete C.D., & Van Vugt M. 2012. "Evolution and the psychology of intergroup conflict: The male warrior hypothesis." *Phil. Trans. R. Soc. B* 367.1589. pp. 670-679.

Meyer J. 2008. *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain*. Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Middlebrook M. 2006. *The First Day on the Somme: 1 July 1916*. Penguin UK.

Newsome B. 2003. "The myth of intrinsic combat motivation." *The Journal of Strategic Studies. 26.4. pp. 24-46.*

Noy S. 1991. "Combat Stress Reactions." *Handbook of military psychology*. edited by Gal R. E. & Mangelsdorff A. John Wiley & Sons.

Otley C. B. 1978. "Militarism and Militarization in the Public Schools, 1900-1972". *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 29, No. 3. Wiley on behalf of The London School of Economics and Political Science. pp. 321-339.

Prior R. & Wilson T. 1992. *Command on the Western Front: the military career of Sir Henry Rawlinson, 1914-18*. Blackwell Publishers Inc.

Quinn, P. & Trout S. (Eds.). 2001. *The literature of the Great War reconsidered: Beyond modern memory.* Springer.

Rachman S.J. 1990. *Fear and courage*. WH Freeman/Times Books/Henry Holt & Co.

Rawling B. 2014. *Surviving trench warfare: technology and the Canadian corps, 1914-1918*. University of Toronto Press.

Roper M. 2011. "Nostalgia as an emotional experience in the Great War." *The Historical Journal*, 54(2). pp. 421-451.

Sekerdej M. 2016. "Rationalization and Acceptance". *The SAGE Encyclopedia of War: Social Science Perspectives* 2016. edited by Paul Joseph. SAGE Publications. pp. 1043

Sion L. 2016. "Enemy Making". *The SAGE Encyclopedia of War: Social Science Perspectives* 2016. edited by Paul Joseph. SAGE Publications. pp. 559-561.

Shalit B. 1988. *The psychology of conflict and combat.* Greenwood Publishing Group.

Sheffield G.D. 2000. *Leadership in the Trenches: Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline in the British Army in the Era of the First World War*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Sheffield G.D. 2001. *Forgotten Victory. The First World War: Myths and Realities*. Headline.

Shils E.A. & Janowitz M. 1948. Cohesion and disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 12(2). pp. 280-315.

Simkins P. 1991. "Everyman at War. Recent Interpretations of the Front Line Experience" in B. Bond (ed.) *The First World War and British Military History*. Orxford.

Simkins P. 2007. *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies 1914 – 1916*. Pen and Sword.

Skirth R. 2010. *The Reluctant Tommy.* Pan Macmillan.

Soboroff S.D. 2012. *Group size and the trust, cohesion, and commitment of group members.* The University of Iowa.

Stallworthy J. 2014. *Anthem for doomed youth: Twelve soldier poets of the First World War*. Hachette UK.

Steiner M. & Neumann M. 1978. "Traumatic neurosis and social support in the Yom Kippur War returnees." *Military Medicine*, 143(12), 866-868.

Stouffer S. A. et al. 1949. "The American soldier: Combat and its aftermath." *Studies in social psychology in World War II*, Vol. 2.

Strachan H. 2003. *The First World War: Volume I: To Arms. Vol. 1*. Oxford University Press.

Swank R.L. & Marchand W.E. 1946. "Combat neuroses: Development of combat exhaustion." *Archives of Neurology & Psychiatry* 55.3. pp. 236-247.

Taylor A. J. P. 1974. *The First World War: An Illustrated History*. Penguin UK.

Taylor S.E. & Brown J.D. 1988. "Illusion and well-being: a social psychological perspective on mental health." *Psychological bulletin* 103.2. pp. 193.

Terraine J. 1963. *Douglas Haig: The Educated Soldier*. Hutchinson.

Thomson M. 2006. *Psychological subjects: Identity, culture, and health in twentieth-century Britain.* Oxford University Press.

Thorburn A.D. 1933. *Amateur Gunners*. W. Porter.

Tolstoy L., edited by Maude L.S. 1999. *The Raid and Other Stories*. Oxford University Press.

Travers T. H. 1979. “Technology, Tactics, and Morale: Jean de Bloch, the Boer War, and British Military Theory, 1900-1914.” *The Journal of Modern History* 51.2. pp. 264-286.

Travers T. 2009. *The killing ground*. Pen and Sword.

Trice A.D. 1982. "Ratings of humour following experience with unsolvable tasks." *Psychological Reports*.

Van Winkle E.P. & Safer M.A. 2011. "Killing versus witnessing in combat trauma and reports of PTSD symptoms and domestic violence." Journal *of traumatic stress* 24.1. pp 107-110.

Watson A 2008. *Enduring the Great War. Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914-1918*. Cambridge University Press.

Welch M. 2000. "The Centenary of the British Publication of Jean de Bloch's Is War Now Impossible? (1899-1999)". *War in History*, Vol. 7, No. 3. SAGE journals. pp. 273-294.

Wheeler J.L. 2006. *Soldier Stories: True Tales of Courage, Honor, and Sacrifice from the Frontlines.* Thomas Nelson Inc.

Wilson C., 1st Baron Moran 2007. *The Anatomy of Courage: The Classic WWI Account of the Psychological Effects of War*. Carroll & Graf.

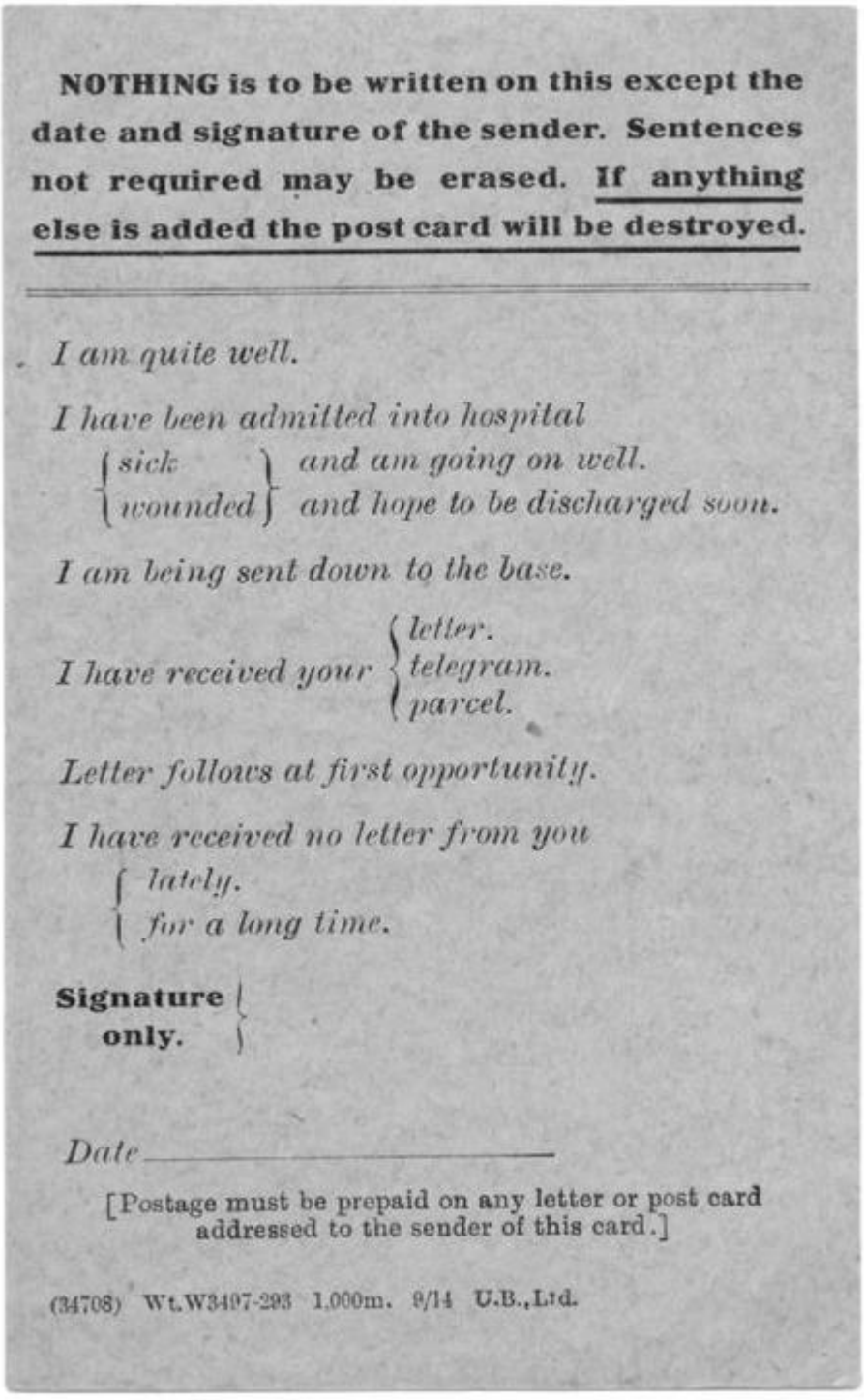
Winter D. 1979. *Death's Men. Soldiers of the Great War*. Penguin.

Winter J. M. 1988. *The Experience of World War I*. Macmillan.

Winter J. & Prost A. 2005. *The Great War in history: debates and controversies, 1914 to the present.* Cambridge University Press.

Wohl, R. 1979. *The Generation Of 1914*. Harvard University Press.

Appendices



NOTHING is to be written on this except the date and signature of the sender. Sentences not required may be erased. If anything else is added the post card will be destroyed.

I am quite well.

I have been admitted into hospital { *sick* / *wounded* } *and am going on well.* / *and hope to be discharged soon.*

I am being sent down to the base.

I have received your { *letter.* / *telegram.* / *parcel.* }

Letter follows at first opportunity.

I have received no letter from you { *lately.* / *for a long time.* }

Signature only.

Date _____

[Postage must be prepaid on any letter or post card addressed to the sender of this card.]

(34708) Wt.W3497-293 1,000m. 9/14 U.B.,Ltd.

Picture 1: A Field Service Postcard. Field Service Postcards were used by soldiers on active service to send speedy messages home without needing for censoring by their officers. Their purpose was to swiftly communicate to their loved ones that they were alive and well and to confirm that mail was received on the Front. The soldier was allowed to delete as appropriate from a selection of pre-printed sentences, yet if anything other than a date and signature were *added*, the card would be destroyed.